the weekly Standard

JUNE 29 / JULY 6, 2009 $4.95

NO COUNTRY FOR 'BURLY MEN'
CHRISTINA HOFF SOMMERS

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BPA INTERNATIONAL

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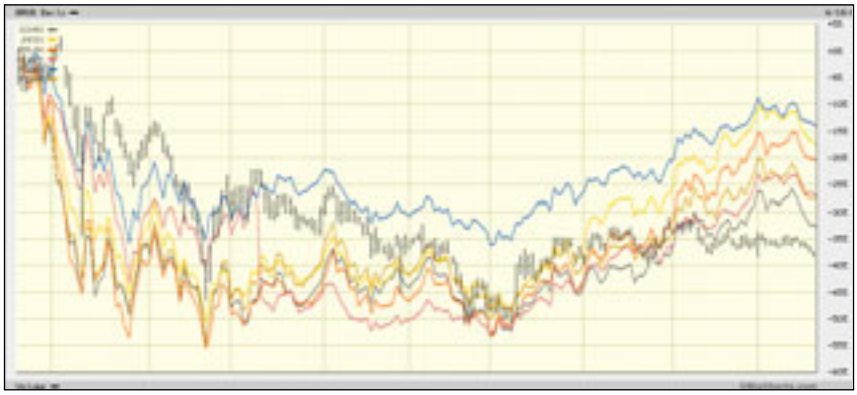
Dick Durbin's 'Insider Trading'

Illinois Democrat Dick Durbin got a lot of bad press last week when Bloomberg publicized stock trades the senator revealed in his 2008 disclosure forms. On September 19, after participating in a closed meeting with Treasury boss Hank Paulson and Federal Reserve Chairman Ben Bernanke—this was when Paulson was trying to scare the bejesus out of lawmakers so they would pass his original TARP plan—Durbin sold off $42,696 of mutual fund holdings, and bought a like amount of Berkshire Hathaway—the holding company of famed investor (and Democrat) Warren Buffett.

According to Bloomberg, "Over four days from Sept. 16 through Sept. 19, Durbin sold $83,156 worth of shares in mutual funds that invested in China and Latin America and in the RS Global Natural Resources Fund, which invests in mining, oil and other natural resources companies. Durbin sold shares in the Fidelity Southeast Asia Fund, the Matthews China Fund, the T. Rowe Price Latin America Fund, and Janus Overseas Fund, and the Aberdeen Natural Resources Fund." By October 2, "he had invested $98,046 in Omaha, Nebraska-based Berkshire Hathaway." (Durbin and his wife sold a third of their Berkshire shares by the end of 2008, taking a loss of $10,419.)



Don't trust a senator to pick stocks for you: Durbin's duds

The stories sparked by the Bloomberg report portrayed a Washington insider with access to high-level information, acting quickly to protect his nest-egg. "Durbin cashed out during big stock collapse," ran a typical headline in the hometown *Chicago Sun-Times*.

But of course Durbin didn't "cash out." And almost all the reporters who ran with this story just seemed to assume that it was an astute move on Durbin's part to move the proceeds from his mutual fund sales into Buffett's stock. But as the "Oracle of Omaha" would probably be the first to say, past performance is no guarantee of future results. Berkshire Hathaway has mostly been gliding downward ever since Durbin bought it—when it was close to its 52-week high.

Indeed, every one of the funds Durbin sold has performed better than Berkshire Hathaway since last September 19. The chart here, which THE SCRAPBOOK cobbled together in five minutes at BigCharts.com, may be a little hard to read. But it shows the prices of the mutual funds Durbin sold and the Buffett stock he bought starting last September 19, and continuing to June 19. Just know that the little black line that ends up at the bottom of the heap—at minus 40 percent—represents the Berkshire stock Durbin bought. This may or may not have been "insider trading," but it certainly was inept trading. ♦

Senatorial Entitlement

Being an officer in the Army Corps of Engineers is no easy task, and rising to the rank of brigadier general is evidence of character, brainpower, and intestinal fortitude. Brigadier General Michael Walsh, fresh from a tour in Iraq, has been dealing with (among other things) the restoration of the Louisiana coastline in the wake of Hurricane Katrina, and by all accounts, has done an exemplary job.

But until last week, when he was testifying before the Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works, he could hardly have expected that his reward for hard work and devotion to duty would be public humiliation at the hands of a politician.

Responding to a question from the junior senator from California, who is female, General Walsh prefaced his answer with the word "Ma'am"—assuming, no doubt, that he was expressing the customary deference and courtesy that politicians expect under such circumstances—but was swiftly, and unexpectedly, interrupted by his questioner. Barbara Boxer, the committee chairman who is famous on Capitol Hill for her hair-trigger temper, personal sense of entitlement, and arrogance—impressive even by Senate standards—addressed General Walsh.

"You know, do me a favor," she said, glowering at the general and adopting the tone of condescension one might use to rebuke a child. "Could you say 'senator' instead of 'ma'am.' I worked so hard to

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get that title, so I'd appreciate it."

"Yes, senator," replied a chastened General Walsh.

Video of this astonishing exchange can be seen to be believed on YouTube, and on innumerable websites.

The Scrapbook could spend the next few paragraphs explaining to readers that witnesses frequently (and appropriately) address members of Congress as "ma'am" or "sir," that military protocol demands such usage, that the Queen of England is customarily called "Ma'am" and not "Queen," that generals themselves are addressed by their subordinates as "sir" (or "ma'am"), that General Walsh was clearly endeavoring to be polite and respectful to Ms. Boxer, and that not all members of the World's Greatest Deliberative Body insist on being referred to by their job title.

But The Scrapbook won't bother with that, all of which is obvious. Instead, we will meditate for a moment on the extraordinary gall of Babs Boxer, on Barbie Boxer's gratuitous public insult of a distinguished soldier, on the culture of swollen egotism in Congress that gives noxious politicians like Mrs. Stewart Boxer the freedom to demean and insult individuals who have labored immensely harder than she—and accomplished considerably more over longer duration—in public service.

If Boxer demands to be addressed as "senator" in recognition of her official status, there is no doubt that nervous witnesses, frightened staffers, and anyone unlucky enough to share an elevator with her, will do so. The Scrapbook, for its part, can think of other titles she's earned. ♦

Honoring Those Who Deserve to Be Honored

Kudos to Lexington Books for publishing within the last year two well-deserved *festschriften* honoring our occasional contributors Werner Dannhauser and Harvey Mansfield

Reason, Faith, and Politics (edited by Arthur M. Melzer and Robert P. Kraynak) gathers 11 essays by former students or colleagues of Dannhauser. The book reflects something of the scope of Dannhauser's interests and his learning, with topics ranging from the political predicament of Israel to Nietzsche's relation to the Pre-Socratics. Among our favorites are Ralph Lerner's wry look at wry authors, "Dispersal by Design," and Jeremy Rabkin's liberal case (of a sort) for a practice infrequently defended these days: "Liberalism Before Disenchantment: Why Jean Bodin Advocated Witch-Hunting." But they're all worth reading. They don't equal the experience enjoyed by those fortunate enough to have been taught by the witty and worldly Dannhauser, but they'll make you wish you had had a chance to enjoy that experience.

The Arts of Rule (edited by Sharon B. Krause and Mary Ann McGrail) consists of 19 essays by students of Harvey Mansfield. Wait a minute, you say! Wasn't there already a collection of essays honoring Mansfield—*Educating the Prince*—edited by Mark Blitz and our own William Kristol? Yup. But there were so many more grateful Mansfield students than could fit into the first volume that a second was needed. These younger Mansfield students also do their teacher proud, with essays ranging from Adam Schulman on Xenophon to McGrail on Hamlet, Krause on Hume, and Steven Lenzner on Leo Strauss's Burke. ♦

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Casual

Every Day is Man Day

On June 15, I went to bed with a pang of melancholy, Father Time having slipped another year out of my back pocket while my attention was elsewhere. Thirty-nine years earlier, I'd been brought into this world the same way that I suspect I'll depart it: naked and crying for my mom.

It's not that I mind getting older. I actually prefer it to dying young. But the rude shock comes when doing the math; the actuarial tables suggest that I've started playing the second half. It's a strange realization, since I still feel like a 19-year-old, even if friends now scowl when I try to do the things I regularly did then, such as driving 95 miles an hour with my knees or hanging out with 19-year-old girls.

But on this day, I went to bed feeling that I'd lost something other than my youth. Watching that night's news, I learned that I'd missed the chance to celebrate National Man Day. With all the phony observances now littering the calendar—it fell on the same week as Husband Caregiver Day, Sneak a Kiss Day, and World Sauntering Day—I'd completely forgotten.

Dreamed up by two Indiana brothers, Joel and Aaron Longanecker, the day was hyped for months on their Facebook page, and they rallied a quarter of a million co-conspirators. The battle cry, according to the Longaneckers, was to take the day to "stand up and say, 'Yes, I am a Man.'"

It was a day, they declared, to eat a steak, to "blow something up, shoot some animal, punch your buddy in the face for no reason" and watch *Rocky* movies all day, never minding that a real man would never enjoy *Rocky III*. That scene with Rocky and Apollo Creed skipping around in the ocean, holding each other in their short-shorts after a particularly rigorous workout—that's about as manly as being a groupie at a John Mayer concert.

Their supporters, however, were not deterred. Testimonials poured in of a day well spent. Men boasted of not bathing, of scratching unholy areas, of showing a pressure washer who's boss, of firing automatic weapons, blowing up prairie dogs, eating large quantities of meat without utensils, and greeting friends "with firm handshakes, or rather, MANdshakes."

HAL MAYFORTH

It made me feel sorry for them. It's not that I don't celebrate my own Man Day every day by tending to my desires, instead of to those of the women and children. Nor do I consider myself some paragon of manhood—though by today's effeminized-man standards, I might actually qualify: I can drive a stick shift, work a chainsaw, enjoy relieving myself outside, and would never think of getting a vasectomy. (It's not that I wouldn't do anything for my wife—I love her more than life itself. But I don't want to be unfair to my future trophy wife. What if she wants kids?) The reason I feel sorry for these mantards is the same reason I feel sorry for men's magazine writers, who on glossy pages filled with androgynous models and which smell like the inside of the Neiman Marcus perfume counter, write self-conscious manly-man articles giving man-tips to even less manly men under titles such as "The 75 Skills Every Man Should Master." It's hard to imagine real men, like Jack Dempsey or Genghis Khan, reading up on how much cuff to show or how to "argue with a European without getting xenophobic or insulting soccer."

The very term "manly man" is self-negating, a formulation that seeks to check its own equipment, to nervously claim that it is as advertised. Real men don't try so hard. It's why men's movements give me the creeps. Though I did become fascinated by one when covering it a few years back: the Promise Keepers. Not because I enjoy standing around in football stadiums, tearfully hugging my buds, listening to bad Christian rock. But because they'd discuss the principle of "headship" as laid out in Ephesians ("wives, submit to your husbands").

My wife is a quasi-feminist, believing women should vote and drive and stuff. She's also a pretty fair Bible scholar, assuring me that I'm cynically wrenching a phrase out of context in un-Christian fashion, then twisting it into a rhetorical balloon animal to try to score cheap points when I'm getting crushed in an argument.

She's probably right. But that hardly matters. I just say, "Read Ephesians" and run like hell. I tell her if she wants to second-guess the inspired Word of God, have at it. But it's not my place to question the Creator. After all, I'm just a man.

Matt Labash

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Resolutely Irresolute

The events of the past week in Iran, following the June 12 presidential election there, have been remarkable and hopeful. It's been a moment when one would like a president of the United States—who has, in such moments, a supporting but not an inconsequential role—to rise to the occasion. Barack Obama hasn't. We are therefore put in the position of hoping that the words of an American president are being mostly ignored, that his weakness won't matter, and that the forces of reform or revolution will be able to prevail—as they may—with the support of many in America, if not the president.

The day after the election, as hundreds of thousands of Iranians gathered in the streets to protest election fraud, White House press secretary Robert Gibbs said the administration was "monitoring" the situation. The next day, Sunday, as the extent of the fraud became clear to anyone willing to see it, Vice President Joe Biden said that while there were "doubts" about the outcome, "I don't think we're in a position to say" that the election wasn't free and fair. Obama played golf.

On Monday, Obama finally had something to say: "I think it would be wrong for me to be silent about what we've seen on the television over the last few days." He said he was "deeply troubled" by the violence but noted, "We respect Iranian sovereignty and want to avoid the United States being the issue inside of Iran." Eight people were killed that day.

On Tuesday, Obama acknowledged the "amazing ferment" inside Iran. But, as the forces of change rallied behind Mir-Hussein Mousavi, and as Mousavi, heretofore a cautious apparatchik, was carried along Yeltsin-like to a position of virtual opposition to the regime, Obama seemed to take the steam out of the protest, declaring, "The difference between Ahmadinejad and Mousavi in terms of their actual policies may not be as great as has been advertised." Meanwhile Gibbs said that while Obama "deplored the violence"—disembodied violence, whose perpetrators went unnamed—he was nonetheless encouraged by the "vigorous debate inside of Iran by Iranians."

On Wednesday, Gibbs repeated those words verbatim and reported that the president would continue to "ensure that we're not meddling." And on Thursday, Gibbs once again said the president "deplored unnecessary killing." Senator John Kerry, defending Obama, said, "We can't escape the reality that for reformers in Tehran to have any hope for success, Iran's election must be about Iran—not America."

All week, the Obama administration bent over backwards to avoid questioning the legitimacy of the Iranian regime. In this, Obama became a de facto ally of President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei. Although Obama finally spoke about the protesters—"the whole world is watching," he said—he never expressed real support for them.

Obama supporters defended his silence. Anything he said to endorse the protests, they argued, would taint the protesters' message and damage their cause.

The protesters, many of whom held signs written in English, seemed to disagree. "On several occasions, I've had supporters of Mousavi say we need President Obama," reported CNN's Reza Sayah, from Tehran. When Wolf Blitzer asked Sayah directly whether the protesters want Obama to speak out in support of their cause, Sayah responded: "I think they do, but they're realistic."

"Realistic" about the weakness, about the foolish and counterproductive "realism," of an American president. How sad.

Two weeks earlier, Obama had promised in Cairo, in his address to the Muslim world, a "new beginning" in U.S.-Muslim relations. He spoke of his belief in democracy and of his "unyielding belief that all people yearn for certain things: the ability to speak your mind and have a say in how you are governed; confidence in the rule of law and the equal administration of justice; government that is transparent and doesn't steal from the people; the freedom to live as you choose."

Those are not just American ideas, he said, but universal human rights. "And that is why we will support them everywhere."

Except not in Iran. And not when it matters.

Yet there is good news: Obama is not the only one to speak for America. After the president's week of equivocation, stubbornly continuing to dodge and weave so that, we suppose, he couldn't be blamed if anything went wrong, or so that Khamenei and Ahmadinejad wouldn't be mad at him in case they prevailed, both houses of Congress passed resolutions in support of the Iranian people. In its resolution, adopted 405 to 1, the House

> (1) expresses its support for all Iranian citizens who embrace the values of freedom, human rights, civil liberties, and rule of law;

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(2) condemns the ongoing violence against demonstrators by the Government of Iran and pro-government militias, as well as the ongoing government suppression of independent electronic communication through interference with the Internet and cell phones; and

(3) affirms the universality of individual rights and the importance of democratic and fair elections.

The lone "no" vote came from Representative Ron Paul. "I have admired President Obama's cautious approach to the situation in Iran," said Paul, "and I would have preferred that we in the House had acted similarly."

That was apparently enough to push the White House over the edge. After the House vote Friday afternoon, Robert Gibbs said the resolution's language is "very consistent" with what President Obama has been saying. Indeed, he claimed, "it echoes the words of President Obama throughout the week."

Right. Still, better late than never.

In 1823, first-term congressman Daniel Webster spoke up in support of the Greek revolution. Responding to critics who said that mere rhetorical support would do the revolutionaries no good, Webster said: "I hope it may. It may give them courage and spirit. It may assure them of public regard, teach them that they are not wholly forgotten by the civilized world, and inspire them with constancy in the pursuit of their great end."

And in any case, Webster continued, support for those fighting for freedom abroad was "due to our own character, and called for by our own duty."

French president Nicolas Sarkozy seemed to grasp this aspect of leadership when he said, "We support the Iranian people, and today the Iranian people are on the street."

It's not too late for the president of the United States to act in a manner due to our own character and called for by our own duty.

—Stephen F. Hayes and William Kristol

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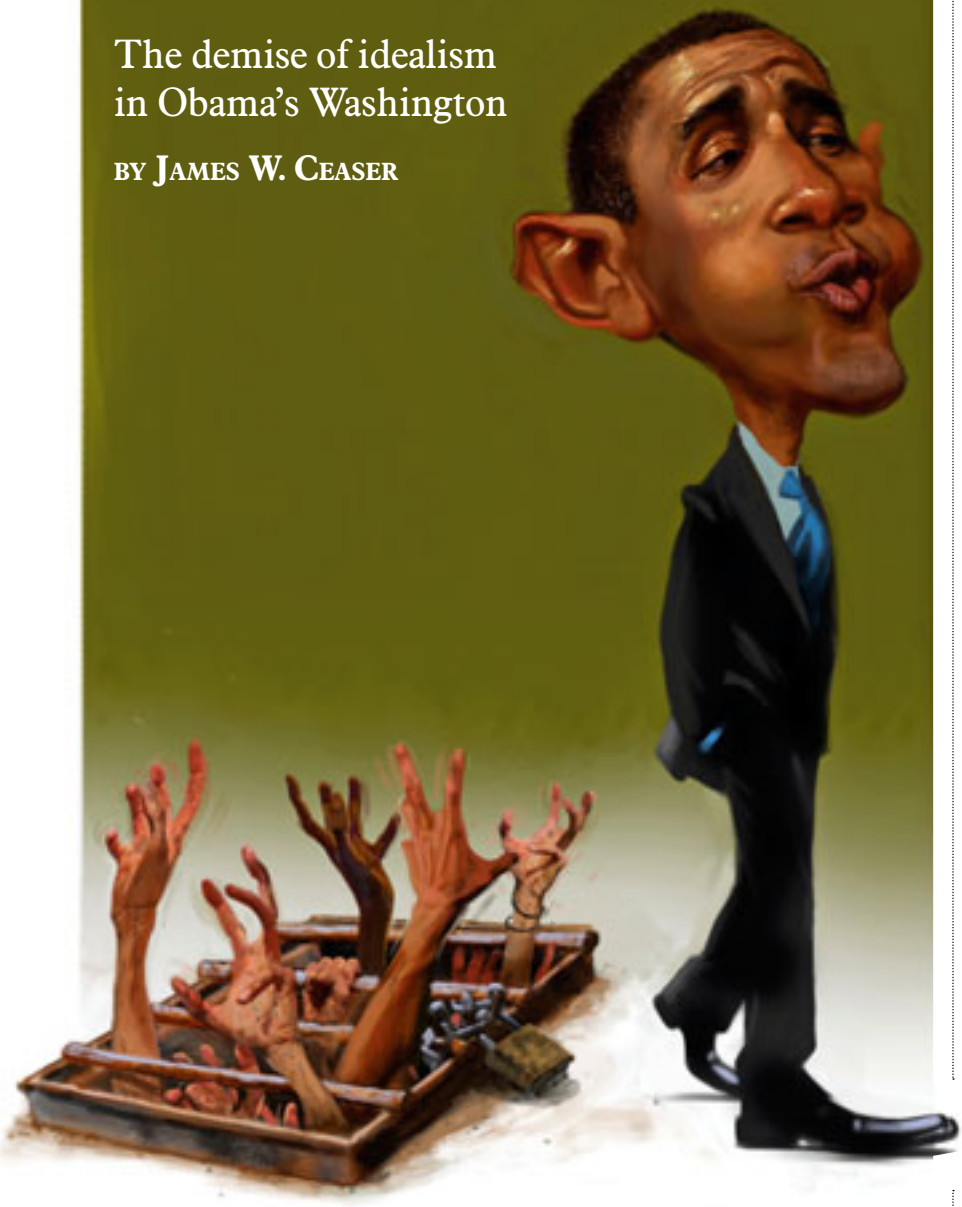
Giving 'Realism' a Bad Name

The demise of idealism in Obama's Washington

BY JAMES W. CEASER



THOMAS FLUHARTY

Democrats are clinging stubbornly to their new religion of "realism" and "pragmatism" in foreign affairs. Even where prudence dictates otherwise, as it surely does in responding to the fraudulent Iranian election and its aftermath, President Obama has been tepid at best in condemning the conduct of the mullocracy. So as reformers in Tehran are being hosed and rounded up, our "realists" stand mute, fearful that any critical comment might upset the one the president dignifies as the "Supreme Leader" or interfere with our Great Reset policy of "engaging" adversaries. The administration will not even await the outcome of events before signaling its eagerness to deal with the current government. Realists will pay any price and bear any burden to avoid anything that resembles the democracy agenda of George W. Bush.

James W. Ceaser is a visiting fellow at the Hoover Institution and professor of politics at the University of Virginia.

Democrats were not always so tough-minded. For decades, they supported the causes of democracy and humanitarianism, regularly excoriating Republican presidents for coddling antidemocratic leaders. President Reagan was taken to task for his cozy relations with dictators like Philippine president Ferdinand Marcos (whom he eventually succeeded in moving aside), and the first President Bush was accused of fighting the first Gulf war to do the bidding of the Saudi king. Even George W. Bush, when it was politically convenient, was whipped with the lash of the Democrats' idealism. Almost all the Democratic contenders for the nomination in 2008 criticized his close relations to Pakistan's Pervez Musharraf, with considerations of realism providing him no relief. Barack Obama was no exception:

> I said very early on, when emergency rule was initiated by Musharraf, that we should suspend military aid … until you had full restoration of democracy, including releasing political prisoners, and insuring that there's freedom of expression and freedom of the press during the election period.

But the Iraq war—and partisan politics—gradually changed the Democrats' calculation. As conditions deteriorated in Iraq, and as many finally accepted that President Bush was in earnest about his commitment to the spread of democracy, liberals flipped. They abandoned their previous commitment to principle, condemned Bush for idealism and ideological blindness, and embraced with fervor the position they labeled realism. Realism, if the

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word is taken at face value, seems to mean nothing more—or less—than seeing the world as it is, without blinders or excessive hopes or fears. But in the context of the debate in recent years, it came to refer to something much more specific: It meant a cessation of all principled talk about democracy and universal rights, including their philosophical foundations, and a willingness to engage with any and all forces that could claim to have created order. Democracy, realists say, is for the long run; in the short run our job is to deal with the forces of order.

Under the sway of this view, liberals were suddenly falling all over themselves to prove their manliness by dismissing Bush's naïveté. Among commentators and intellectuals, the passionate embrace of realism went further still. The real realists—no touch of sentiment or nostalgia here—took to ridiculing democracy itself. Hadn't democracy been promoted, to no good effect, in Palestine and Lebanon? (In the latter case, President Obama seemed last week to change his tune.) A Harvard professor even wondered out loud to me how much democracy was worth, even in principle, if it had elected George W. Bush. This was the cup of academic wisdom from which many of our politicians began to drink.

In fact, the Bush policy was never quite as given to idealism as was commonly depicted. In many of the places where the administration pursued democracy, the nondemocratic forces were not our allies, and they offered little prospect of establishing viable order. The options for establishing stable regimes in our world today are few, and often the hoped-for strongmen are not that strong. There was never, for example, an available despot on hand in Iraq who could have miraculously picked up the pieces and restored order. None of this, however, prevented realists from condemning the surge and proposing the mirage of partitioning Iraq among three nondemocratic states.

Yet granting the Bush critics part of their point, it can be admitted that pursuing democracy became too inflexible a doctrine. Foreign policy is a practical realm in which the primary aim is to promote the nation's security and interest. There is no room for an ethics of intention, only for an ethics of results or responsibility. No nation should follow a formula for its own sake. But this obvious counsel of prudence leaves open the question of what it is that promotes our security and interests. The masters of so-called realism have all too often missed opportunities for fundamental change. Their "tough" acceptance of order turns into a worship of order, and they discount the prospects of change even before it has the chance to test its strength. Just where, one wonders, would the current realists have stood at the time of the Cedar Revolution in Lebanon or the Orange Revolution in the Ukraine? The question answers itself. They would surely not have been "meddling" in the Syrian or Russian zone of influence, but checking with Assad and bowing to Putin.

Realism as practiced has become an inflexible response to an imaginary idealism. Its costs will soon become obvious, if they are not so already. These include not just an inability to fashion a moral or principled domestic consensus for foreign policy, but also harm to reformist forces around the world that are struggling to establish constitutional government in the face of authoritarian rulers.

One thing is certain. President Obama in five brief months has taken not only his administration, but his entire party, a long way down the road to this new posture of celebrating order. The current silence of Democrats on the Hill, once passionate defenders of democracy, speaks volumes. Meanwhile, the president has not only cultivated the art of publicly apologizing before the world for George W. Bush's sins, he is preemptively removing America from taking any strong public stands out of fear that they will backfire in the current environment. Only, it seems, when the world realizes that this is Obama's America, and not the America of the past, can our moral authority carry any weight. Evidently, we have not yet reached that point.

Realism as practiced has become an inflexible response to an imaginary idealism. Its costs will soon become obvious, if they are not so already. These include not just an inability to fashion a moral or principled domestic consensus for foreign policy, but also harm to reformist forces around the world that are struggling to establish constitutional government in the face of authoritarian rulers. It might be quaint in our pragmatic age to speak of the intrinsic value of honor, but honor does have its practical benefits. It instills the confidence in others that, at least to the measure of your ability, you will have their back. Does anyone believe that democrats in Tehran, Havana, or Caracas are celebrating today the triumph of the cool realists in Washington?

It is a dictum of our new foreign policy that "moral hubris" is out and "humility" is in. This is fine so long as humility does not turn into its own form of hubris, giving the green light everywhere to the forces of oppression. Democrats now run the risk of turning their vaunted new doctrine of realism into a rigid ideology. It would be much better to follow the sober advice of that unerring scholar of international relations, Polonius: Neither an idealist nor a realist be. ♦

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There's No False Choice on Iran

The consequence of a weak president.

BY FRED BARNES

Rejecting "false choices" is a favorite rhetorical device of President Obama. His speeches are littered with examples. A half-dozen times, he's repudiated "the false choice between our security and our ideals." He's dismissed "the false choice between sound science and moral values." He's not only disposed of "the false choice between securing this nation and wasting billions of taxpayer dollars," he's laid to rest the clash between those who'd "conserve our resources" and those who'd "profit from these natural resources."

But confronted by a popular revolt in Iran, Obama has succumbed to a false choice. Either support the democratic forces in Iran aligned against the rigged presidential election or preserve his chance to negotiate with the Ahmadinejad regime for a nuclear arms deal—one or the other. The president thinks he's stuck with a dilemma. He's not. The two options aren't mutually exclusive. The choice is indeed false.

To escape his predicament, Obama has sought neutrality between a discredited regime and democratic protesters. This actually helps the regime, since President Ahmadinejad and the mullahs don't need Obama's support. The protesters do. In effect, Obama has tilted in favor of the regime. The result is personal shame (for Obama) and policy shame (for the United States).

The president should know better. In dealing with dictators, honey is rarely more effective than vinegar. Obama's respectful overtures to Iran's leaders evoked only angry recriminations against America and no sign of willingness to settle differences on nuclear arms or anything else.

Reagan and Gorbachev: Tough stands led to fruitful negotiations.

DIRCK HALSTEAD / TIME & LIFE PICTURES / GETTY IMAGES

President Bush tried the no-criticism tack with President Putin. Nice words and good personal relations failed to curb the Russian's belligerent tendencies. The same was true with Presidents Nixon and Carter in their relationship with Soviet leaders. Nixon believed he'd achieve more by the soft approach. He got bad treaties. Carter thought chumminess with Leonid Brezhnev would tame Soviet aggression. The invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 proved him wrong.

President Reagan, in contrast, knew a false choice when he saw one and adopted the opposite tack. He challenged the Soviets with strong words and stern policies. The Soviets complained, but they also made unprecedented concessions in arms control and other talks.

Obama, as best I can tell, has never considered the Reagan approach. But the corrupt and tyrannical nature of the Iranian regime is a clue it could be effective. Implacable opposition and harsh denunciations, coupled with a readiness to talk, might cause Ahmadinejad and Ayatollah Khamenei to be more agreeable.

It's worth a try, unless we are to believe, as Obama seems to, that Ahmadinejad and the mullahs could be more hostile than they are now. Not likely. Is it even conceivable they are so sensitive to public criticism, so touchy, that they'd be prompted to spurn serious negotiations they might otherwise have agreed to? No.

The latest round of pandering by Obama hasn't worked. The day after Ahmadinejad's reelection, amid indications of voting fraud, the White House issued a statement. "We were impressed by the vigorous debate" in the election and will be monitoring "irregularities," Robert Gibbs said, as if he were commenting on a Chicago alderman's election.

Two days later, Obama said he is "troubled . . . whenever I see violence perpetrated on people who are peacefully dissenting." He neglected to identify the perpetrators of the violence. Obama added he hopes "whatever investigations" of the fraud charges ensue "are done in a way that is not resulting in bloodshed."

The next day, with hordes of demonstrators in the streets of Tehran and other Iranian cities, Obama insisted,

Fred Barnes is executive editor of THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

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"it's not productive, given the history of U.S.-Iranian relations, to be seen as meddling, the U.S. president meddling in Iranian elections." Besides, he said Khamenei "indicates he understands the Iranian people have deep concerns about the election." Less than three days later, he declared the election results legitimate.

Obama has a very broad definition of "meddling." It includes any expression by him of support for the Iranian protesters, many of them pro-American and eager for his backing. His reference to "history" was presumably to the American role in ousting a left-wing government in Iran in 1953—yes, 1953! Obama's implication: the events of 1953 bar him from criticizing the cruel and undemocratic regime today or siding with Iranian freedom marchers. That's quite a stretch. And the Iranians accused him of meddling anyway.

A day later, Obama made an egregious mistake. He suggested there's no difference on policy between Ahmadinejad and his presidential rival, Mir-Husseini Mousavi. Once again, that was helpful to Ahmadinejad. If the two are peas in a pod, what's all the fuss about? No reason to meddle, for sure.

In fact, there are significant differences. Mousavi leads the forces of reform and democracy. Ahmadinejad leads the forces of theocracy and repression. Mousavi wants to improve relations with the United States and says the matter of a nuclear weaponized Iran is "negotiable." Ahmadinejad has "shut the door" on both.

When Navy sharpshooters, with Obama's permission, shot Somali pirates and rescued an American ship captain, the president got well-deserved credit for smooth handling of a minor emergency. He was active and energetic when the stakes were small.

In Iran, the stakes are large, though you wouldn't know it from Obama's passive and ineffective response. He acts as if his choice of what to do in Iran is too difficult, too fraught with danger, for him to decide. It's not. A stronger president would see the choice as false. ♦

Steal this eBook

An Internet piracy party grows in Sweden.

BY CHRISTOPHER CALDWELL

During the Kosovo war in 1999, a lot of Americans got a chuckle out of the story—probably apocryphal—about Yugoslav soldiers storming into a Belgrade news agency and demanding that the journalists hand over the Internet. What was funny was the way the soldiers *sort of* got it. They understood that the Internet had changed warfare. They just didn't understand how completely.

We may be in a similar position today. While the cutting edge of web development is still in Silicon Valley, the rules and customs of Internet behavior are being shaped elsewhere. In Western European countries, which mostly have higher rates of broadband subscribership than the United States, a new idea of property is evolving—the idea that anything you can manage to download for free, by hook or by crook, is yours. Congress's annual "Special 301 Report" on piracy used to focus on Russia, China, and Southeast Asia. This year's report placed on its list of problem countries Finland, Norway, and Italy. It noted that Spain is a place where pirating music and movies over the Internet is "widely perceived as an acceptable cultural phenomenon, and the situation is exacerbated by a government policy that has essentially decriminalized illicit [peer-to-peer] file sharing."

In the European elections in early June, a fifth of Swedes under the age of 30 voted for a party set up to defend copyright infringement and illegal Internet downloading. The Pirate party got 7 percent of the country's total votes and a seat in the European parliament in Strasbourg for its lead candidate, the former software engineer Christian Engström. (The Swedes aren't the only people rallying to defend, rather than defeat, illegal downloading—a German Pirate party got 5 percent of the vote in one Berlin district.)

Who the heck are these people? Some have cast the Swedish pirates as extremists. Their big bankroller, the Wasabröd cracker heir Carl Lundström, backed the populist and xenophobic New Democracy party in the early 1990s. In an election that saw racist parties take seats in England and Eastern Europe, extremism is an easy word to throw around. But the Pirate agenda is very narrow, and the Stockholm daily *Dagens Nyheter* is right to call them an antidote to traditional kinds of extremism. The Pirates polled 10.5 percent among men, 1.5 percent among women. That probably means they are lapping up disaffiliated young males, depriving hardline parties like the Sweden Democrats of their base.

In a way, the Pirates have a lot more business running for the European parliament than Sweden's establishment parties do. For the old political class in virtually all Western European countries, Strasbourg is a sinecure—a place to send party hacks who have lost their seats in their respective national parliaments but still have the itch to pontificate and are willing to travel. The Pirates, by contrast, actually have EU-based business they want to transact.

Various EU intellectual-property directives permit law enforcement to demand the web addresses of those who illegally download materials. A whole activist network has arisen

Christopher Caldwell is a senior editor at THE WEEKLY STANDARD. *His* Reflections on the Revolution in Europe: Immigration, Islam, and the West *will be published by Doubleday in July.*

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in Sweden to call for an end to such enforcement. In 2003, a forum called the "Pirate Bureau" was opened by downloaders. Two years later that forum turned into Pirate Bay, a "torrent indexing website" that facilitates pirating. In 2006, the Pirate party was founded. Then, this spring, a Swedish judge, responding to a complaint by the International Federation of the Phonographic Industry, sentenced four principals of Pirate Bay to a year in jail for abetting the distribution of copyrighted content, and fined the site $3.6 million. (The site will remain online pending an appeal.) By the eve of the European elections, the Pirate party's membership had tripled, thanks to publicity from the case.

Pirate Bay and the Pirate party call the decision a sham. According to their highly legalistic reading of the technicalities of Internet law, they are above prosecution. There are a couple reasons why. First, when a U.S. court shut down the file-sharing site Napster for copyright infringement in 2001, the problem it cited was that Napster kept actual music files on its central file server. Not only was this illegal—it was unnecessary. Files can be left on individual users' computers and then accessed as needed through a peer-to-peer networking system such as BitTorrent. No central server needs to be involved. There is, however, an obstacle—figuring out where to find all these copiable files. You need something like Pirate Bay, which is a "BitTorrent tracker" or "torrent indexing site." It does not break into anybody's house. It just gives you the address of a rich man who leaves the door unlocked.

Supporters celebrate the Pirate party's victory in European Parliament elections.

OLICIER MORIN / AFP/ GETTY IMAGES

That such activity should not be prosecutable is the second part of the Pirates' defense. EU statutes hold Internet Service Providers and search engines blameless for the actions of the people who circulate on and sell things through them. Its rules parallel Section 230 of the 1996 Communications Decency Act in the United States. If Google links to someone who libels or defames you, you can't sue Google. If someone sells you a bad car on Yahoo, it is not Yahoo's fault. Since you can find BitTorrent streams on Google, Pirate Bay is only doing what Google is doing. The Swedish court rejected this claim.

To be fair, the Pirates' desire to get free stuff is part of a much larger agenda. Alas, the parts that *don't* involve getting free stuff are not terribly coherent. According to the Pirate Party Declaration of Principles, "Ideas, knowledge and information are by nature non-exclusive and their common value lies in their inherent ability to be shared and spread." Most people would agree with that. But the Pirates seem unable to tell the difference between an idea and a good. Debate and consumption thus become indistinguishable. Nor do the Pirates accord property rights any role in the *creation* of goods. They want to cut copyright protection to five years and overturn patent law. "Patents have many damaging effects," the manifesto continues. "Pharmaceutical patents are responsible for human deaths in diseases they could have afforded medication for." But this is to treat penicillin and chloroquine as if they grew on trees. They don't. People invest in research because medicines can be patented. In a similar way, the Pirates treat the Internet as if it existed in a state of nature, and as if copyright were merely an obstacle set up by a bunch of meanies to keep us from plucking its fruits.

The Internet is an evolving human creation. It is a cultural phenomenon, a set of behaviors. What etiquette and what law prevail there will depend on how we transfer our old common-sense understandings from the physical world into cyberspace. The right analogies will be hard to find. The Pirates hold it a self-evident truth that regulators should not be looking at what people are downloading, legally or illegally. "Just as it is prohibited to read someone else's mail today, it shall be forbidden to read or access email." Two can play at that metaphor game, though. What if the right analogy for regulating piracy

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is our existing laws on mail fraud or weapons smuggling? Or what if Al Gore was right to call the Internet an "information superhighway"? In that case, you will need to be identifiable via some form of "license plate" to do anything—even if you're just driving to Borders to buy a CD.

There is an element of nationalism in the Pirates' movement. The vast majority of the cultural patents infringed come from the United States. Until you can name a living Swedish film director, it would seem a safe bet that most Swedes perceive the downside of eroding patent protection as minimal. In August 2004, a lawyer for DreamWorks wrote to Pirate Bay to complain of the illegal downloading of *Shrek 2*. A spokesman for Pirate Bay responded with a brief note that ran, in part:

> As you may or may not be aware, Sweden is not a state in the United States of America. Sweden is a country in northern Europe. Unless you figured it out by now, US law does not apply here. For your information, no Swedish law is being violated. It is the opinion of us and our lawyers that you are . . . morons, and that you should please go sodomize yourself with retractable batons.

You can say the Pirates stand for privacy. You can also say they stand for taking other people's property without paying for it. At the heart of the pro-piracy movement is the powerful but pedestrian force of consumerism. Piracy is a $55-billion-a-year business, and CD sales are half of what they were a decade ago. In the privacy of a ballot box, 7 percent of Swedes voted as if they were answering a referendum question: Does the new House of Heroes CD belong to Warner Brothers or to me? (*Oh! To me? Goody!*)

In place of old-style populism, the Pirates offer a confused, cyber-anarchistic argument that virtual property is virtual theft. It is a style of radicalism less interested in helping workers seize the means of production than in helping shoppers seize the means of consumption. ♦

The Dollar's New Best Friend

Beijing warms up to the greenback—because it has to.

BY GORDON G. CHANG

Last Tuesday, Brazil, Russia, India, and China—the so-called BRIC nations—met in Yekaterinburg, Russia, for what was supposed to be an anti-American gabfest. The main agenda item for the first formal meeting of the four largest developing economies was the future of the dollar. In recent months, Beijing and Moscow have led a global charge against the greenback, and Brasilia has been a willing co-conspirator in the effort. The BRIC post-summit communiqué referred to the world's currency problems but, to the surprise of observers, did not attack the dollar head on.

What happened? Beijing, apparently, stopped the other nations cold. The Chinese called the tune at the Moscow meeting—their economy is almost as large as the other three combined—and so the surprisingly nonconfrontational tone of the BRIC official statement mirrored Beijing's recent climbdown on the currency issue.

The Chinese government in the last few weeks seems to have radically changed its tune on this issue. In March, Zhou Xiaochuan, the head of China's central bank, called for the replacement of the dollar as the world's reserve currency in a widely reported text released to the public. In May, however, Beijing officials took a different tack, going out of their way to talk about the dollar's unique status.

Why is Beijing acting like the greenback's new best friend? The Chinese of course realize they would sustain massive losses if they triggered a global flight from the dollar, and they do not appear to have any good ideas as to what should replace the world's financial architecture, now built on the American currency. Yet there is more to their newfound sense of responsibility. They are starting to understand that they have little ability to change the dollar-based international system.

Their fundamental problem is that the Chinese economy, for all the talk of "delinkage," is still tightly bound to America. China has an export-dominated economy—perhaps as much as 38 percent of its gross domestic product is attributable to the sale of goods to foreign markets. The country exports to many nations, but there is one market on which it is particularly dependent. In 2007, 97.7 percent of China's overall trade surplus related to sales to the United States, and in 2008 the figure was 90 percent. In short, China runs a trade deficit with the rest of the world, buying raw materials and components, and a surplus against the United States, selling finished goods. Beijing, therefore, is locked into buying Treasuries and will remain so until Chinese manufacturers either find new foreign markets—something they are only having moderate success in doing—or they can sell to Chinese consumers. And consumption growth, despite rosy government statistics, appears to be anemic.

This extraordinary reliance on the American market means that China had—and still has—no real choice but to continue to purchase dollar-

Gordon G. Chang is the author of The Coming Collapse of China.

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denominated obligations with its export earnings. It is, of course, theoretically possible for Chinese technocrats to convert dollar earnings into pounds, euros, or yen, but the markets for those currencies are not big enough to handle the country's outsized purchases.

Beijing has, moreover, a more fundamental problem: Chinese officials cannot at this stage afford to turn their back on the dollar and thereby constrain the American economy. If they constrain the American economy, Americans will not be able to continue to buy Chinese goods. If Americans cannot buy Chinese goods, the Chinese economy will precipitously decline, and if the Chinese economy precipitously declines, the country's political system, dependent on the ongoing delivery of prosperity, will be destabilized. So Beijing, despite its incessant carping, continues to buy dollar-denominated debt. As Dai Xianglong, former central bank chief and now head of the national social security fund, says, China has no choice but to purchase U.S. Treasury obligations. In Beijing, it is known as the "dollar trap."

The central government does occasionally sell Treasuries, but such dispositions are small and always followed by more purchases. Americans are concerned that the Chinese will one day change their mind and dump our debt, thereby throwing our economy—and the global financial system—into turmoil. Beijing, from time to time, hints that is what it could do. For instance, in the middle of 2007, two Chinese officials threatened to employ the "nuclear option" against the United States: sell dollars and U.S. Treasury obligations. "I personally believe we have so many foreign exchange reserves that we should be smarter in setting the issues," said Xia Bin, one of the pair. "It should at least be a bargaining chip in talks." This is the first time that a senior economic adviser in Beijing publicly suggested using China's reserves for political leverage. He Fan, the other official, wrote in the official *China Daily* about Beijing causing "a mass depreciation" of the greenback.

We should thank Xia and He for revealing the thinking in the inner circles in Beijing and for providing a reminder that we need to pay down our debt and rebalance our economic relations with China. But their remarks, in reality, were not much of a threat. What would happen in the worst case scenario if the Chinese central government decided to dump U.S. Treasuries? Beijing would have to buy something with the proceeds of its sales. As a practical matter, it would have to buy debt denominated in pounds, euros, and yen. The values of those currencies would then skyrocket. London, Brussels, and Tokyo would then have to try to depress the values of their currencies, which means they would have to buy . . . dollars. In short, there would be a great circular flow of cash in the world's currency and debt markets.

They're now rooting for the dollar: China's central bank.

NEWSCOM

There would be turmoil in those markets, but it would not last long beyond the time the Chinese ended their dollar dump. And we would end up in just the same place that we are now, except that our friends, instead of a potential adversary, would be holding our debt. Global markets are still deep and flexible and can handle just about anything. The fact that Beijing has not employed its so-called nuclear weapon is an indication that the Chinese know it is not, as a practical matter, usable.

And the Chinese realize something else. They have been, over the last two decades, the biggest beneficiary of the dollar-based international financial system that Washington maintains. If the dollar were dethroned, there would be turmoil in global markets. That would, in all probability, lead to a reduction in global commerce. And should Beijing get its wish and the renminbi become the world's reserve currency, its value would surely appreciate, thereby choking off China's export economy. A recent estimate says the renminbi is undervalued by about 40 percent against the dollar.

Hillary Clinton once said we can't "get tough" with our Chinese bankers. She's wrong. We can. ♦

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Russia Remains the Same

It will be business as usual in Moscow whether Obama apologizes or not. BY CATHY YOUNG

A month after his speech in Cairo reaching out to the Muslim world, Barack Obama will make another historic trip: this time, to Moscow. While many Obama supporters hope that the July 6-8 visit will push the much-anticipated "reset button" in the badly strained relationship between Russia and the United States, critics fear that Obama's accommodating stance will simply enable more bad behavior by Russia.

Hopes of a rapprochement between Russia and the United States under an Obama administration were being voiced even before last November's election. Expectations of "change" from Obama went hand in hand with cautious optimism about Russia's new president Dmitri Medvedev, the hand-picked successor to Vladimir Putin, who took the post of prime minister. These hopes were somewhat dampened when, the day after Obama's victory, Medvedev threatened to put Russian missiles on the Polish border in response to the planned U.S. deployment of a missile shield in Poland and the Czech Republic. Still, a warmer welcome followed with a telephone conversation between the two presidents, and talk of a "fresh start" has intermittently continued.

Today, more than a year into the Medvedev presidency, it is obvious that there has been no change of course at the Kremlin. The extent of Medvedev's true authority remains unclear, and Putin is still a figure to contend with. While Medvedev may seem more sympathetic to domestic liberalism—he doesn't, for instance, share his patron's open, visceral aversion to journalists and activists critical of the state—his rhetoric on foreign affairs has been no less aggressive than Putin's. Any "reset," then, would have to be based on a change in American policy.

Indeed, most American critics of the "new Cold War"—on both the left at the *Nation* and the paleocon right at the *American Conservative*—share the belief that the recent chill between the United States and Russia was caused primarily by American arrogance and insensitivity. In this view, Russia extended a hand of friendship to the United States after September 11 only to be repaid with repeated slaps in the face: the Bush administration's withdrawal from the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty in 2002, NATO expansion into Eastern Europe and the former USSR, support for regime change in ex-Soviet republics (particularly the 2004 "Orange Revolution" in Ukraine), and plans for a missile shield that Russians fear is directed mostly at them. Supporters of a "fresh start" undoubtedly hope Obama's Moscow trip will include apologies for at least some of these perceived wrongs.

The perception, however, is quite tendentious. The ABM treaty withdrawal drew only mild objections from Russia and was accompanied by the signing of the Strategic Offensive Reductions Treaty on very advantageous terms for the Kremlin.

The oft-repeated claim that NATO expansion violated a promise made to Mikhail Gorbachev during the first Bush administration is likely a political myth. (It was strongly refuted by the diplomat and academic Philip Zelikow in 1995.) And, for all the talk of Russian paranoia, it is extremely doubtful that Moscow is seriously worried about an attack by NATO forces—which, as former top Soviet arms negotiator General Vladimir Dvorkin pointed out on the independent website EJ.ru in April 2008, is virtually unthinkable considering Russia's nuclear potential.

Charges of U.S. meddling in the Orange Revolution show a remarkable amnesia about the blatant attempt to fix the Ukrainian presidential election in favor of Russian-backed candidate Leonid Yanukovich. Even former U.S. ambassador to the Soviet Union Jack F. Matlock, usually sympathetic to Russian grievances, harshly criticized Putin's ham-fisted interference.

As for the missile shield, no one has offered a plausible explanation of how it threatens Russia—considering it could not neutralize even 1 percent of Russia's nuclear arsenal—other than vague claims that it could be the start of a much larger U.S. defense system. (The United States has also repeatedly offered to open the installations to Russian inspection.)

This is not to say that U.S. conduct has been faultless. Some pro-democracy critics of the Putin regime, such as Moscow-based Carnegie Endowment scholar Lilia Shevtsova, charge that the Bush administration neglected America's relationship with its former Cold War rival, giving the Kremlin too much of a free pass on human rights and paying too little attention to Russian sensitivities over such issues as the missile shield. Still, Shevtsova concedes that a more constructive approach from the United States would have, at most, only somewhat mitigated conflicts made inevitable by the aims and attitudes of the Russian leadership.

The Kremlin's conduct in the Putin era, almost unchanged under the Putin-Medvedev tandem, has been largely shaped by two related motives. One is resentment over the loss of empire and superpower status, which has an element of populist pandering but also reflects the genuine sentiment of much of Russia's political elite. The other is self-preservation: The crony-

Cathy Young is a contributing editor to Reason *magazine.*

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capitalist junta that currently rules, and owns, Russia is fearful that democratic change could threaten its power.

Both factors were part of Putin's vitriolic reaction to the "color revolutions" (the start of Russia's sharp anti-American turn). The peaceful victories of the pro-Western opposition next door were seen both as Western poaching on Russia's turf and as warnings of a domestic peril. The same issues are key to understanding the controversy over NATO expansion. The real "threat" to Russia, General Dvorkin argued in his 2008 commentary, is "civilizational isolation" if the Russian regime continues to resist democracy and modernization while its neighbors join the democratic capitalist West. Indeed, Russia's response to the European Union's entirely nonmilitary Eastern Partnership initiative has been hostility and griping about "anti-Russian" alliances.

All this posturing has little to do with Russia's real national interest or security. Moscow's conduct toward its neighbors, with its imperial pretensions and clumsy bullying, is a good object lesson in how *not* to win friends and influence people: In a June 15 column on Grani.ru, Russian political analyst Stanislav Belkovsky noted that "the Kremlin has done its best to squander the remnants of its influence in its own former empire" and to push away key allies. The recent maneuvering to bribe Kyrgyzstan to evict a U.S. airbase essential to the American and NATO effort in Afghanistan shows that the desire to prove to Uncle Sam who's boss in "post-Soviet space" outweighs not only Russia's putative interest in "resetting" relations with the United States, but also its very real interest in preventing a victory by radical Islamists in Afghanistan.

What does all this mean for the Obama administration? It should be remembered that Obama is not exactly a Russia dove. During the campaign, he had harsh words for Russia's war in Georgia and its attempts to use its energy resources as a geopolitical weapon. His chief adviser on Russia is Michael McFaul, a Stanford University professor and Hoover Institution fellow who is a strong advocate of democracy promotion—and who actually hosted a program on democracy on Russian television in the mid-1990s.

McFaul, currently special assistant to the president for national security affairs and senior director of Russian and Eurasian affairs at the National Security Council, is a strong supporter of U.S. engagement with Russia. He is also, however, outspoken in his belief that true partnership is possible only with a Russia that shares a commitment to liberal democracy.

A very different approach is advocated in a report presented to the Obama administration in March by the nongovernmental Commission on U.S. Policy Toward Russia, co-chaired by Gary Hart and Senator Chuck Hagel of Nebraska (a Republican who campaigned for Obama last year). In the commission's view, the United States should focus on economic and political cooperation with Russia and avoid pushing too hard on democracy and human rights. It's hard to tell to what extent this report, which recommends reevaluating missile defense and abandoning the goal of NATO membership for Ukraine and Georgia, will influence policy. But one of its more nebulous suggestions—to urge the Russian government to respect its stated commitments to democratic principles "while respecting Russia's sovereignty, history, and traditions and recognizing that Russian society will evolve at its own pace"—is such a classic Obamaism that some variation on it can be expected to pop up in the president's Moscow speech.

At this point, any major shift in U.S.-Russian relations is unlikely. With the effects of the economic crisis muted and oil prices up, Russia is in a less cooperative mood than in early spring (despite simmering problems that include possible social unrest and violence in the provinces of the Caucasus). This month, the Kremlin rejected proposals for missile defense cooperation with the United States as long as such plans included installations in Poland and the Czech Republic.

The hope that Russia could help resolve the Iranian nuclear problem amount to little more than wishful thinking. Russia's semi-friendship with Iran in recent years has been rooted primarily in a common adversarial relationship with the United States. If a more America-friendly Russia tried to pressure Iran, it would be unlikely to have leverage. While the Russians could stop providing Iran with technology, there are always alternatives like North Korea around.

The prospects for Obama's outreach encouraging liberalization in Russia are also doubtful, given the murky politics of the "tandemocracy." There have been credible reports of Putin-Medvedev friction; some Russian political analysts believe the presidency and the premiership now act as somewhat effective constraints on each other's powers, substituting for the normal checks and balances of democracy. But there is no clear-cut rivalry between an anti-Western hardliner and a pro-Western reformer in which the United States could throw its weight behind "the good guy."

One concern among critics of the Kremlin regime is that a too-accommodating stance by Obama will embolden a more aggressive Russian stance in the "near abroad." In a Grani.ru column, Hudson Institute fellow Adrian Piontkovsky warned of ominous signs that Moscow may be preparing for a second war in Georgia this summer. While NATO membership for Georgia and Ukraine is off the table for now, given the two countries' internal problems, one hopes that Obama will send a strong message that U.S. commitment to their sovereignty is undiminished.

When all is said and done, perhaps the best-case scenario to be expected from Obama's Moscow trip is business as usual—and not too many apologies. ♦

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The June 12 Revolution

Whatever happens in Tehran, there's no going back to the Ayatollah Khomeini's Islamic Republic.

By Reuel Marc Gerecht

The modern Middle East has had numerous "game-changing" moments, when history turned. Napoleon Bonaparte's invasion of Egypt in 1798, Muhammad Ali's conquest of the Nile Valley in 1805, and the French invasion of Algeria in 1830 introduced Europeans and European ideas into the region. The British discovery of oil in Persia in 1908, the collapse of the Ottoman Empire in 1918, the Saudi conquest of Mecca and Medina in 1925, the awakening of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood in 1928, the Arab Revolt in Palestine in 1936, and the Godfather-like victory of Gamal Abdel Nasser in Cairo in 1954 further accelerated tradition-crushing Westernization and gave birth to nationalism, pan-Arabism, and contemporary Islamic fundamentalism. The Israeli triumph in the 1967 Six Day War, the Iranian revolution of 1979, the fall of Saddam Hussein in 2003, and the birth of Iraqi democracy two years later buried secular pan-Arab dictatorship, politically inflamed the Islamic identity, and set the stage for the growth of representative government in a more religious Middle East.

A protester at the Iranian embassy in Paris

MEHDI FEDOUACH / AFP / GETTY IMAGES

The Iranian presidential election of June 12 may soon rank with these history-making events. We may well look back on it as the "June 12 revolution" even if—especially if—the regime cracks down on the supporters of Mir-Hussein Mousavi, the candidate who ran second to incumbent Mahmoud Ahmadinejad in the dubious official vote tally. Since the end of the Iran-Iraq war (1980-88), which almost destroyed the Islamic Republic and forged the reputation and character of then-Prime Minister Mousavi, most Iranians have been exhausted revolutionaries. More like sheep than foot-soldiers of a dynamic faith, Iranians have largely veered away from confronting their increasingly unpopular rulers.

Now the election appears to have stiffened their backbones and quickened their passions. They've had enough of their unpleasant, joyless lives. The election has given a wide variety of Iranians—many of whom would not voluntarily associate with each other because of religious, political, and social differences—a simple and transcendent rallying cry: One man, one vote! Even the supreme leader's favorite, President Ahmadinejad, must obey the rules. It is in some ways a bizarre situation when hundreds of thousands of Iranians rally to protest the outcome of an election that was rigged from the beginning: All candidates must pass a revolutionary litmus test, and the vast majority of contenders, even from well-respected, nonthreatening families, cannot. Yet it is in part precisely because this election was so strait-jacketed that it has become pivotal.

We don't know yet how aggressively Iran's clerical overlord, the Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, and Ahmadinejad rigged the balloting. Ahmadinejad remains popular in small town Iran and among the urban poor. His constant attacks on the corrupt revolutionary elite—especially the fabulously wealthy cleric Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, who probably bankrolled Mousavi's run for the

Reuel Marc Gerecht, a Weekly Standard *contributing editor, is a senior fellow at the Foundation for Defense of Democracies.*

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presidency—resonate, even among highly Westernized Iranians who align themselves with the "pragmatic" Rafsanjani. Ahmadinejad's undiminished Islamic zeal, which he marries with Iranian nationalism, appeals to many, especially those who fought in the ghastly Iran-Iraq war and retained their faith. Nevertheless, Khamenei and Ahmadinejad felt compelled to cheat.

It is the crudeness of it all that is so revealing and damning. Although Iranians have a reputation for being subtle, elegant, and polite, their political manners are usually pretty rough. The government blatantly announced a majority of 63 percent for Ahmadinejad less than two hours after the polls closed. If Khamenei had only allowed a respectable delay for counting all the paper ballots, and then had Ahmadinejad win by just a few points (as he might actually have done), the massive protests probably would not have happened. Khamenei surely knew that Mousavi could be a stubborn man, blessed with a real revolutionary's sense of honor and no awe whatsoever for Khamenei's status as successor to the Grand Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini. But Mousavi isn't an open book, which has probably redounded to his advantage among his followers. One can drape the Islamic color green (the more typically Shiite black had already been co-opted by the regime) all over Mousavi and no one, including Mousavi, probably has any firm idea of what it means—except to say, We are good Muslims, so don't shoot.

Khamenei, who worked with and struggled against Mousavi for a decade, knows the former prime minister politically as well as anyone. The supreme leader knows that what Mousavi lacks in charisma he has always made up in doggedness. That Khamenei baited the candidate, and so carelessly denied millions of Iranians the illusion that their votes mattered, shows how insular and insecure Khamenei, a politicized cleric of some intellectual sensitivity, has become in his august office. Whatever Mousavi has inside, it was enough to scare Khamenei profoundly, and not just because the supreme leader didn't want to hand a victory to Rafsanjani, Khamenei's brother-in-arms-turned-foe. Without Rafsanjani, the reformist cleric Mohammed Khatami would never have risen to the presidency, which he held from 1997 to 2005. Once Khatami was in office, both Khamenei and Rafsanjani worked to gut the reform movement that enveloped him. Regardless of their deep personal differences, Khamenei and Rafsanjani no doubt could work together in the future to gut Mousavi if the Machiavellian Rafsanjani felt so inclined.

For now, though, Rafsanjani is backing Mousavi for his own survival. Ahmadinejad dreams of downing Rafsanjani and his entire spoiled clan. For the poor-boy former Revolutionary Guardsman who fought in the Iran-Iraq war, Rafsanjani is the quintessential target of the anti-mullah jokes that are a staple of life among Iran's poor. Ahmadinejad also undoubtedly remembers that Rafsanjani, for good reason, once tried to abolish Ahmadinejad's beloved Revolutionary Guard by folding them into Iran's regular army.

Similarly, Khamenei backs Ahmadinejad overwhelmingly for one reason: fear of Khatami. (Hurting Rafsanjani is an ancillary pleasure.) Not Khatami personally, but what he represented between 1997, when he won the presidency by a landslide, and 2000, when the regime fully recovered its authoritarian composure. Although certain American analysts like to belittle the historic importance of Khatami ("Really just Khamenei with a smile"), the movement behind him terrified Khamenei and the Revolutionary Guard Corps (*Pasdaran*). Among intellectuals, journalists, academics, students, and clerics—and among women from just about every walk of life—an intense discussion began in the mid-1990s about how Iranians could honor the revolution but also leave it behind them. The scholars Olivier Roy and Farhad Khosrokhavar, a Franco-Iranian sociologist who has been the most insightful observer of his homeland, wrote a book in 1999 that captured in its title the mood and debate within the Islamic Republic, *Iran: Comment sortir d'une révolution religieuse* ("How do you exit a religious revolution?"). Roy and Khosrokhavar were not optimistic that the reform movement could pull it off peacefully. They were right.

Khamenei didn't, at least for a time, share the French scholars' pessimism. Not before or since have we seen such ferment among Iranians about the Western idea of civil liberties. Serious men with impressive Islamic pedigrees tried to devise an Iranian civil society with a bill of rights that could withstand the challenges posed by anti-democratic clerics hurling Islamic law and custom at the importation of Western models, clothed in Muslim dress, into the body politic. The enormous tension between theocracy and democracy, visible in the Islamic Republic from its founding and only quelled in the early years by the awesome, exquisitely Shiite charisma of Khomeini, exploded. Iranian intellectuals, including well-known and fearsomely bright members of the clergy, started to question the very foundations of the Islamic republic—first and foremost the position of supreme leader (*velayat-e faqih*) that Khomeini had devised for himself, the office that guarantees the marriage of church and state in the person of a nearly all-powerful divine. Anyone who had the pleasure of reading the cornucopia of fresh, provocative Iranian publications in the 1990s knows how ready millions of Iranians were to try greater democracy. There was a severe hunger in the land. There still is.

Raised on a diet of mostly Western thought that the creation of the dictatorial Islamic Republic has only

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The streets of Tehran, June 15: Unless Mousavi gives up, a permanent opposition to Khamenei has been formed.

EPA / ABEDIN TAHERKENAREH

amplified, Iranians have had quite a bit of democratic conditioning, that prelude to representative government that "realists" believe a people must experience before they can handle democracy. As Khosrokhavar revealed in his astonishing book *Avoir vingt ans au pays des ayatollahs* ("To Be Twenty in the Land of the Ayatollahs"), Western ideas—especially feminism and the right of individuals to define themselves—are more powerful today in the deeply conservative holy city of Qom than they were 30 years ago. Khamenei began to realize in the 1990s what Khomeini instinctively knew from a richer understanding of Islamic law and the human condition: A majority of Muslims can do the wrong thing if given a chance.

Khamenei acted so crudely and rashly on June 12 because he'd already seen this movie. What's happening in Iran now is all about democracy, about the contradictory and chaotic bedfellows that it makes, about the questioning of authority and the personal curiosity that it unleashes. Khamenei knows what George H.W. Bush's "realist" national security adviser Brent Scowcroft surely knows, too: Democracy in Iran implies regime change. Where Iranians in the 1990s could try to play games with themselves—be in favor of greater democracy but refrain from saying publicly that the current government was illegitimate—this fiction is no longer possible. Khamenei has forced Mousavi and, more important, the people behind him into opposition to himself and the political system he leads. Unless Mousavi gives up, and thereby deflates the millions who've gathered around him, a permanent opposition to Khamenei and his constitutionally ordained supremacy has now formed. Like it or not, Mousavi has become the new Khatami—except this time the opposition is stronger and led by a man of considerable intestinal fortitude.

Everyone in Tehran may have crossed the Rubicon. It was always questionable whether the office of the *velayat-e faqih* would survive Khamenei; he has now pretty much guaranteed that it will not. If it turns out that Mousavi has actually had one of those life-changing epiphanies that sometimes happen on the Iranian "left"—the cases of Abdullah Nuri, Iran's boldest clerical dissident who was interior minister under Rafsanjani and Khatami, and Saeed Hajjarian, a dark lord of Iran's intelligence service who became a source for some of the nation-rattling exposés about domestic assassination teams in the '90s, come to mind—who knows what could happen if Khamenei were so stupid as to rerun the election fairly.

Mousavi would probably win, perhaps by a wide mar-

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gin, since he would have already faced down Khamenei and Ahmadinejad in a head-to-head battle. The prestige, attraction, and fear of established power, what the Iranians have historically called *heybat*, would have vanished. And if the winning margin were large enough, it's possible that the Revolutionary Guard Corps, with whom Khamenei has made a Faustian power-sharing bargain, would back down from a military coup. The Corps is not a monolith. As it has greatly expanded in size, incorporating itself into Iran's economy and placing its graduates in every university, its rank-and-file members have probably become more attentive to the national mood of doom and gloom. The observations of Bernard Hourcade, a regular visitor to Iran and the longtime head of the Iranian studies program at the National Center for Scientific Research in Paris, about the pro-Khatami sympathies of many *Pasdaran* in the 1990s were probably sound.

The smart money should still be on a coup by the Revolutionary Guard if Khamenei does not stand firm against Mousavi and a repeat of the 1990s. But a coup is not a foregone conclusion. It is a mistake to see the Mousavi-Ahmadinejad split as one of class and education, or of urban versus rural, or more secular versus more religious. These factors are real, but so are countervailing forces that have given Mousavi a good deal of support among men and women of all classes and religious dispositions who are fed up with the spiritual depression that has been the Islamic Republic's most notable gift to its people. Modernity has been no kinder to the clerical regime than it was to the shah. Like Khatami before him, Mousavi has tapped into this profound frustration, which thanks largely to Khamenei's missteps is turning into anger.

The Guard's commanders, who are among the most ideologically committed Islamists in Iran, certainly would be willing to kill their countrymen to protect the system they cherish. But there may be cracks in the rank and file's esprit that are hard for outsiders to see. Whether Khamenei fears this is impossible to know. He's probably not so blinded by personal dislike that he fails to register Mousavi's war-gained, nation-saving reputation, which surely counts with older Guardsmen. If the street demonstrations continue and Khamenei continues to blink (asking the Guardian Council to review "possible" voter fraud and thus showing himself to be off-balance and unwilling to hammer Mousavi and his followers), then it's a reasonable guess that Khamenei does not trust the *Pasdaran*. He may think they will go too far in oppressing the opposition—or that they will be unwilling to do what all dictatorships must be able to do when challenged.

Plainclothes police beat a demonstrator in Tehran, June 14

TOPSHOTS / AFP PHOTO / STR

No matter what happens, the Islamic Republic as we have known it is probably over. All regimes need some sense of legitimacy to survive, and the Islamic Republic has rested on two pillars. One is the belief that the people of Iran continue to back the Islamic revolution and the essentials of the political system that has developed since. Cynics may say that the regime has never really believed this, that dictatorships always only pretend that they are popular but really know they are unloved. Although cynicism isn't uncommon among Iranians, the illusion of representative government backing the Islamic revolution has been inextricable from Iran's identity since 1979. The ruling elite, in their domestic and foreign propaganda, have prided themselves on the image of a country that is both more religious and more populist than any other Muslim country in the Middle East. Khamenei's speeches, unlike Khomeini's, often focus on the God-fearing, virtuous Iranian people as a source of his strength and the strength of the entire Muslim world. Khomeini really did think of himself as a long-awaited Shiite manifestation of God's will. The Iranian people weren't important to his ability to communicate with the Almighty. By contrast, Khamenei is somewhat humble and earth-

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bound. He needs the Iranian nation's approval in ways that were utterly foreign to his predecessor. If Iran collapses into just another military dictatorship, this populist *raison d'être* goes with it.

The second critical pillar of support has been the republic's appeal to both traditional and revolutionary Shiism, which means most concretely the regime's embrace of the clergy as a means of legitimating the state. The differences among clerics can be enormous—many despise Khamenei for his political presumption and educational mediocrity. But the clergy is still a brotherhood. And it has been, even at its crankiest, an institution wedded to Khomeini's Islamic Republic. As much as Khamenei may scorn his more juridically accomplished and conservative brothers, he needs them. If Khamenei makes the wrong move in the next few weeks and ends up giving a green light to the slaughter of young Iranians on the streets, he'll probably lose the clergy, all but the most retrograde, who do not represent the clerical establishment.

If Khamenei makes the wrong move in the next few weeks and ends up giving a green light to the slaughter of young Iranians on the streets, he'll probably lose the clergy, all but the most retrograde, who do not represent the clerical establishment.

A coup by the Revolutionary Guard would be an unmitigated disaster in the eyes of most mullahs, who have jealously guarded their preeminent position in society. Qom and perhaps even Mashhad, an important clerical and pilgrimage site where Khamenei has his financial power-base, would go into permanent opposition. Iraq's great clerical training ground in Najaf, the most sacred of Shiism's "gateways" to heaven, where an Iranian, the Grand Ayatollah Ali Sistani, presides, would likely become more assertive in expressing its views on how good Shiites everywhere should live. Sistani is already probably the most widely respected religious guide in Iran, in part because he's seen as a democracy-supporting ayatollah of moderate views who has refrained from dictating to his flock. It's impossible to know how all of this would play out, but a coup by the *Pasdaran* would surely make Iran a much nastier place, where the Guards would have to keep a brutal hand on society. The clever flexibility of Iran's clerical dictatorship—knowing when to oppress the dissatisfied and when to allow them room to play—would be replaced by a regime profoundly foreign to the Persian way.

It's not difficult to foresee the Islamic Republic spiritually unraveling. If it does, the most important experiment of Islamist ideology since the birth of the Muslim Brotherhood will have proven itself—to its own people, to the clerical guardians of the faith, and to the world—a failure. Unless Mousavi withdraws and leads his followers in a renewed quietist retreat, the Islamic revolution, which shook the Muslim world 30 years ago, will now become either a real laboratory of democracy or a crude and violent dictatorship that might rival the Baathist regimes of Iraq and Syria in its savagery. Either outcome would be momentous.

It's a pity that President Obama has trapped himself in a doomed outreach to Khamenei. Even if Mousavi wins the present tug-of-war, he'll probably support Iran's continued development of nuclear weapons. He was in office when the Islamic Republic first became serious about building the bomb; his powerful backer, Rafsanjani, is the true father of the nuclear program; and there is little reason why Mousavi would want to anger a pro-nuclear Revolutionary Guard Corps that had refrained from downing him.

But for there to be any chance that Iran will cease and desist from its nuclear quest, Mousavi must win the present struggle. If Ahmadinejad and Khamenei triumph, they will not relent. For them, and for the Revolutionary Guard behind them, nuclear weapons are the means to become global players and secure the power they can no longer confidently draw from their own people. Triumphant, the Revolutionary Guard, who have overseen all of the Islamic Republic's outreach efforts to Arab extremists like Hamas and Hezbollah, will surely get nastier abroad as they become more vicious at home.

The principal issue right now inside Iran isn't the nuclear question. It's what it has been since Khomeini died: How do you escape from a religious revolution? Mousavi might, just might, have an answer. Even if he is not our friend—and turns out to be in many ways our enemy—we should all pray that he wins. President Obama would do well to be just a bit more forceful in defending democracy for a people who must surely have earned his respect. Iranians will forgive the president his "meddling." He does carry, after all, the name of the man—Hussein, the prophet's grandson—who long ago defined Shiism's boundless admiration for those who defend their people and their faith from tyranny. ♦

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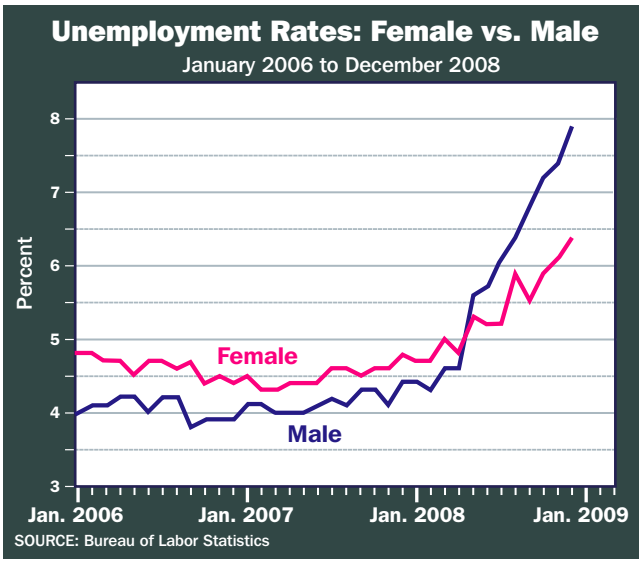
No Country for Burly Men

How feminist groups skewed the Obama stimulus plan towards women's jobs

By Christina Hoff Sommers

A "man-cession." That's what some economists are starting to call it. Of the 5.7 million jobs Americans lost between December 2007 and May 2009, nearly 80 percent had been held by men. Mark Perry, an economist at the University of Michigan, characterizes the recession as a "downturn" for women but a "catastrophe" for men.

Men are bearing the brunt of the current economic crisis because they predominate in manufacturing and construction, the hardest-hit sectors, which have lost more than 3 million jobs since December 2007. Women, by contrast, are a majority in recession-resistant fields such as education and health care, which gained 588,000 jobs during the same period. Rescuing hundreds of thousands of unemployed crane operators, welders, production line managers, and machine setters was never going to be easy. But the concerted opposition of several powerful women's groups has made it all but impossible. Consider what just happened with the $787 billion American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009.



Last November, President-elect Obama addressed the devastation in the construction and manufacturing industries by proposing an ambitious New Deal-like program to rebuild the nation's infrastructure. He called for a two-year "shovel ready" stimulus program to modernize roads, bridges, schools, electrical grids, public transportation, and dams and made reinvigorating the hardest-hit sectors of the economy the goal of the legislation that would become the recovery act.

Women's groups were appalled. Grids? Dams? Opinion pieces immediately appeared in major newspapers with titles like "Where are the New Jobs for Women?" and "The Macho Stimulus Plan." A group of "notable feminist economists" circulated a petition that quickly garnered more than 600 signatures, calling on the president-elect to add projects in health, child care, education, and social services and to "institute apprenticeships" to train women for "at least one third" of the infrastructure jobs. At the same time, more than 1,000 feminist historians signed an open letter urging Obama not to favor a "heavily male-dominated field" like construction: "We need to rebuild not only concrete and steel bridges but also human bridges." As soon as these groups became aware of each other, they formed an anti-stimulus plan action group called WEAVE—Women's Equality Adds Value to the Economy.

The National Organization for Women (NOW), the Feminist Majority, the Institute for Women's Policy Research, and the National Women's Law Center soon

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Christina Hoff Sommers is a resident scholar at the American Enterprise Institute. She is the author of The War Against Boys *and editor of* The Science on Women and Science, *forthcoming from AEI press.*

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joined the battle against the supposedly sexist bailout of men's jobs. At the suggestion of a staffer to Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi, NOW president Kim Gandy canvassed for a female equivalent of the "testosterone-laden 'shovel-ready'" terminology. ("Apron-ready" was broached but rejected.) Christina Romer, the highly regarded economist President Obama chose to chair his Council of Economic Advisers, would later say of her entrance on the political stage, "The very first email I got . . . was from a women's group saying 'We don't want this stimulus package to just create jobs for burly men.'"

No matter that those burly men were the ones who had lost most of the jobs. The president-elect's original plan was designed to stop the hemorrhaging in construction and manufacturing while investing in physical infrastructure that is indispensable for long-term economic growth. It was not a grab bag of gender-correct programs, nor was it a macho plan—the whole idea of economic stimulus is to use government spending to put idle factors of production back to work.

The president-elect responded to the protests by sending Jason Furman, his soon-to-be deputy director at the National Economic Council, along with his senior aides to a meeting organized by Kim Gandy and Feminist Majority president Eleanor Smeal. Gandy described the scene:

> I can't resist saying that this meeting didn't *look* like the other transition meetings I attended. In addition to the presence of more women, the room actually looked different—because Feminist Majority President Ellie Smeal had asked that the chairs be set in a circle, with no table in the center.

The senior economists listened attentively as Gandy and Smeal and other advocates argued for a stimulus package that would add jobs for nurses, social workers, teachers, and librarians in our crumbling "human infrastructure" (they had found their testosterone-free slogan). Did Furman mention that jobs in the "human infrastructure"—health, education, and government—had increased by more than half a million since December 2007?

One could pardon him for not being argumentative. His boss at the economic council, Lawrence Summers, had become a national symbol of the consequences of offending feminist sensibilities and had been opposed by feminists in his appointment to the top White House post. Gandy and Smeal found their circle partners to be engaged and curious and were delighted that they stayed longer than scheduled: "We left feeling that all our preparation would bear fruit in the form of more inclusion of women's needs, and we were right."

GARY LOCKE

They were right indeed. Our incoming president did what many sensible men do when confronted by a chorus of female complaint: He changed his plan. He added health, education, and other human infrastructure

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components to the proposal. And he tasked Christina Romer and Jared Bernstein, Joseph Biden's chief economist, with preparing an extraordinary report that calculated not only the number of jobs the plan would likely create, but the gender composition of the various employment sectors and the division of largess between women and men.

Romer and Bernstein delivered "The Job Impact of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Plan" on January 10. They estimated that "the total number of created jobs likely to go to women is roughly 42 percent." Lest anyone miss the point, they added that since women had held only 20 percent of the jobs lost in the recession, the stimulus package now "skews job creation somewhat towards women."

In triumph, Gandy, Smeal, and their sister activists turned their attention to Congress. They perfected a special "handshake pitch" for members of Congress to be used when reminding them of the importance of rebuilding our human infrastructure, intoning, "That infrastructure is fragile too." With Speaker Pelosi and Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid on board, the revised recovery act sailed through Congress, and President Obama signed it into law on February 17.

In her March "Below the Belt" column on the NOW website, Kim Gandy could not contain her elation over "this happily-ever-after 'stimulus story.'" When she and her allies saw the final recovery package, they were amazed to find "over and over" versions of "very specific proposals that we had made." More than that, the programs NOW had proposed had vast sums of money next to them—"numbers that started with a 'B' (as in billion)," Gandy said gleefully. "It's impossible to convey just how many hours we put into this issue during December and early January and how fruitful it really turned out to be."

Right again. It is now four months since the bill was signed into law. A recent Associated Press story reports: "Stimulus Funds Go to Social Programs Over 'Shovel-ready' Projects." A team of six AP reporters who have been tracking the funds find that the $300 billion sent to the states is being used mainly for health care, education, unemployment benefits, food stamps, and other social services. According to Chris Whately, director of the Council of State Governments, "We all talked about 'shovel-ready' since September and assumed it was a whole lot of paving and building when, in fact, that's not the case." At the same time, the Labor Department's latest (June 5) employment report shows unemployment rates of 8 percent for women and 10.5 percent for men. "Unprecedented" is what Harvard economist Greg Mankiw called the new 2.5 percentage-point gender gap. "It's the highest male-female jobless rate gap in the history of BLS [Labor Department] data back to 1948," said Mark Perry.

There is great room for debate over the effectiveness of government stimulus programs, and over how much impact a focused "shovel-ready" spending program would have achieved by now. What is not debatable is that changes in the American economy and workforce are favoring service sectors where women are abundant and that the current severe contraction is centered on sectors where men, especially working-class men, predominate. That an emergency economic recovery program should be designed with gender in mind is itself remarkable. That, in current circumstances, it should be designed to "skew" employment further towards women is disturbing and ominous.

Here is a clue to what has happened. The op-ed attacking the "macho stimulus plan" invoked Abigail Adams's famous admonition to her husband to "remember the ladies" at the Constitutional Convention, and concluded, "Obama would be wise to do the same and balance the package." It is, of course, preposterous to think of Abigail Adams, or any of the illustrious feminists of yore, proposing to "balance a package," much less opposing an effort to put unemployed men back to work. The historical allusion is revealing.

Within living memory, the American feminist movement was a valiant, broad-based vehicle for social equality. It achieved historic victories and enjoys continuing, richly deserved prestige for its valor and success. But it has now harnessed that prestige to the ethos and methods of a conventional interest group.

Recall that the Obama administration has taken extraordinary steps to insulate itself from the machinations of organized lobbyists, establishing strict limits and procedures for contacts and communications of every sort. Yet its first major policy initiative was transformed by an orchestrated barrage of emails, op-eds, online petitions, open letters, faxes, phone calls, scripted handshakes, and meetings. And the administration went to great lengths to satisfy its petitioners that their proposals had been adopted directly into law. The administration (and Congress) must have been thinking that groups such as NOW and the Feminist Majority were crusading for social justice, when in fact they were lobbying for their share of the action, to the detriment of urgent necessities.

A Washington feminist establishment that celebrates the "happily-ever-after" story of its victory over burly men cannot represent the views and interests of many women. Those men are fathers, sons, brothers, husbands, and friends; if they are in serious trouble, so are the women who care about them and in many cases depend on them. But NOW and its sister organizations see the world differently. They see the workplace as a battlefront in a zero-sum struggle between men and women, where it is their job to side with women. Unless the Obama administration and Congress find the temerity to distance themselves from the new feminist lobby, the "man-cession" will deepen and further mischief will ensue. ♦

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Give Bankruptcy a Chance

Let's not institutionalize the bailout approach. There's a better way to deal with financial failure.

By David Skeel

The conventional wisdom about the bailouts of 2008 goes something like this. Federal regulators started off on the right foot by bailing out Bear Stearns and midwifing its sale to JPMorgan Chase. They were right to bail out AIG six months later, but botched the execution. And Lehman Brothers, the only exception to the bailout rule, showed once and for all that bankruptcy is not an adequate way to handle the collapse of a large financial institution.

But what if regulators hadn't bailed out Bear Stearns? If we conduct this simple thought experiment, it raises serious questions about both the conventional wisdom and the Obama administration's new proposals for regulating investment banks and bank and insurance holding companies. Bankruptcy starts to look much better, although it could use several market-correcting tweaks.

The Bear Stearns saga unfolded in March 2008. After the markets lost confidence in Bear and its $18 billion of cash reserves began to disappear, Bear Stearns chief executive Alan Schwartz called Tim Geithner, who was head of the New York Federal Reserve Bank. Geithner, then-Treasury Secretary Hank Paulson, and Ben Bernanke pushed Bear into the arms of JPMorgan, a much healthier bank. The deal was structured so that the creditors of Bear Stearns were fully protected, Bear's shareholders took a serious haircut, and the government kicked in a $29 billion guarantee of Bear's most dubious assets.

If regulators had decided not to bail Bear out, the short-term effects might have been jarring. Regulators were particularly worried about the extremely short-term loans—known as "repo" loans—that investment banks depend on for financing. A repo loan is structured as a sale of securities by the borrower to the lender, with a promise by the borrower to buy the securities back the next day. If there were a major default in this previously safe lending market, the market might have frozen up and major repo lenders who were not repaid might have been destabilized or even failed.

Some of these consequences might have ensued, but the risk of widespread ripple-effect collapses—also known as contagion effects or systemic risk—was almost certainly overstated. The creditors of Bear Stearns would have suffered losses, and the shareholders would have been wiped out. But this hard medicine would have sent a very clear message to the managers, creditors, and shareholders: Better watch what the company is doing, or you could get burned. In more technical terms, a Bear Stearns bankruptcy would have eliminated moral hazard—the tendency not to take precautions if you'll be spared the consequences of bad outcomes.

When Bear Stearns fell, Lehman Brothers was widely viewed as similarly vulnerable, since it too was highly leveraged and heavily exposed to subprime mortgages. Yet Richard Fuld, Lehman's chief executive, rejected a proposed investment by Warren Buffett and refused to seriously consider selling the company in the months after the Bear Stearns bailout. When Lehman filed for bankruptcy six months later, on September 15, 2008, no one even knew who Lehman owed money to and who the counterparties on its derivatives contracts were.

AIG was similar. The most impressive document produced by AIG on the eve of its collapse was a secret report designed to show federal regulators just how devastating a bankruptcy would be. As summarized in the *New York Times*, the report predicted that derivatives markets and the insurance industry could collapse if AIG defaulted. These responses made perfect sense if you assumed—as everyone did after the Bear Stearns bailout—that regulators would bail out any big, troubled financial institution. Not only was there no need to plan for bankruptcy, but the bailout strategy gave Lehman and AIG an incentive *not*

David Skeel is the S. Samuel Arsht professor at the University of Pennsylvania Law School.

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to prepare for the worst. The more unprepared they were, the worse the bankruptcy option would look and the more likely a bailout would be forthcoming.

This, not the bankruptcy system, is why Lehman's collapse was so disastrous. Lehman, its suitor Barclays, and everyone else assumed the government was standing by with buckets of money. But regulators played bait and switch, deciding at the last minute not to provide bailout funds after all. Lehman's failure to prepare, and the way it was dumped into bankruptcy, were the problems. The bankruptcy itself has gone remarkably smoothly.

If Bear had been left to file for bankruptcy back in March, the managers and investors of Lehman and AIG surely would have acted differently in the weeks before their failures. The prospect of bankruptcy would have given them a very different perspective on the implications of their financial difficulties. At the least, they would have gotten their books in order and started looking for buyers for their businesses much earlier.

By all accounts, Paulson, Geithner, and Bernanke—the three musketeers of the financial crisis—never seriously considered stepping to the side and allowing Bear Stearns to file for bankruptcy. Why is this? One reason is that the mere whisper of systemic risk strikes fear into the hearts of financial regulators. If regulators agree to a misguided bailout, there are few immediate consequences. But if they forgo the bailout and the default infects other institutions, they could face a marketwide collapse and eternal condemnation. Given the stakes, regulators routinely overestimate the likelihood of systemic risk.

These particular regulators—Geithner, especially—were even more wired for bailouts than most. Paulson, the former head of Goldman Sachs—one of the healthiest investment banks—is a problem solver and deal maker. His instinct is to make a deal and move on—which is what regulators did with Bear and JPMorgan. Bernanke, as is well known, was a scholar of the Depression at Princeton prior to his appointment to the Federal Reserve. The mistake he vowed never to repeat was being too tightfisted with government money in a time of crisis, as the Depression-era Fed certainly was.

With Bear Stearns and AIG especially, Geithner seems to have been the point man. Geithner cut his teeth in the international affairs division of the Treasury, and as a key underling to Larry Summers, when Summers was secretary of the Treasury in the Clinton administration. The 1990s saw two key crises that seem to have permanently shaped Geithner's instincts: Mexico's currency crisis in 1994, and the collapse in 1998 of Long Term Capital Management, the giant hedge fund run by superstar economists and mathematicians. Both times, regulators opted for a bailout (funded by private banks in LTCM's case), and both bailouts are widely viewed as successful interventions. Mexico's crisis passed, and Long Term's collapse had little evident lasting effect on the market.

What is often forgotten is that these bailouts, successful as they were, did have a cost: They protected investors against the downside risk of lending to developing countries. Investors kept pouring money into these markets after the Mexican bailout, which contributed to crises in Asia and elsewhere at the end of the decade.

But the bailouts are remembered as successes. The lesson Geithner learned is that bailouts are always the best response when a large institution or country is in trouble. This lesson lies at the heart of the Treasury's proposals for reforming U.S. financial regulation. In addition to requiring hedge fund advisers to register with the SEC, imposing disclosure requirements for derivatives, and expanding the Fed's systemic risk authority, the proposals authorize bank regulators to step in and take over "systemically important" nonbank financial institutions, as the FDIC already does with commercial banks (that is, banks that take deposits). By taking resolution authority away from the bankruptcy courts and giving it to bank regulators, this proposal extends and institutionalizes the bailout policy of the past year. If the proposals pass, large financial institutions will have the same incentives that Bear Stearns, Lehman, and AIG had: to make sure a default would be as messy as possible, and count on negotiating a bailout with banking regulators if things go sour.

A more sensible approach would be to give the bankruptcy laws a chance. The prospect of bankruptcy at the end of the line would discourage excessive risktaking in the first instance, encourage creditors to monitor the institutions they have invested in, and if dark clouds do develop, encourage managers to make plans for an orderly bankruptcy. Bailouts will be even less necessary, and bankruptcy more sensible, when the administration's other reforms are put in place. As one of their principal justifications for bailing out Bear Stearns, regulators claimed that Bear's books were so unclear that they had no idea what its exposure was. The new disclosure and capital requirements will significantly reduce this opacity.

The current bankruptcy laws aren't perfect. The principal shortcoming is best illustrated by AIG. AIG had a huge portfolio of the financial derivatives known as credit default swaps in its financial products subsidiary. These contracts act like insurance, with one party buying protection from the other in the event a third party defaults on its obligations. Unlike most creditors, the counterparties to AIG's derivatives contracts would have been permitted to cancel the contracts and to sell any collateral they held if AIG had filed for bankruptcy, thanks to the exemption from the ordinary bankruptcy rules these contracts enjoy.

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(Both parties can claim credit for this special treatment: Alan Greenspan, the Clinton and Bush Treasury Departments, and the derivatives trade group all lobbied for it in the 1990s and 2000s.) If AIG had filed for bankruptcy, all of these counterparties could have canceled their contracts at the same time. Defenders of the AIG bailout argue that the mass cancellation of these contracts could have paralyzed the credit default swap market, driven down asset values as everyone tried to sell their collateral at the same time, and led to the failures of other institutions.

It is far from clear that the dire predictions were accurate. But with a simple, two-part tweak, the bankruptcy laws could be adjusted to respond to these systemic risk concerns. First, instruct the Fed to survey the nation's financial institutions, much as it did with the recent stress tests, and identify which are too interconnected to fail. This would remove any uncertainty as to who is and is not in the club. Second, add a small handful of provisions to the bankruptcy laws for these systemically important institutions. The key provision would simply apply the ordinary stay—the rule that creditors cannot cancel their contracts or try to collect what they are owed—to the derivatives counterparties of a systemically important debtor.

The derivatives stay would have one obvious benefit and one not so obvious one. The obvious benefit is that it would prevent the creditors of the next AIG from all demanding collateral or cancelling their contracts at the same time. By filing for bankruptcy, the company could halt the carnage that bank regulators worry about. The less obvious benefit is that this rule would encourage derivatives counterparties to deal with institutions that are not systemically important. A counterparty that dealt with an ordinary institution would always have the right to cancel its contracts, even in bankruptcy, whereas those that deal with behemoths would be subject to the stay in bankruptcy. Unlike the administration's proposals, which simply assume that we will continue to have institutions that are too big and interconnected to fail, the bankruptcy alternative would thus help curb the tendency for big institutions to grow relentlessly bigger.

The bankruptcy alternative would not prevent regulators from regulating. Nothing would stop them from imposing high capital requirements on systemically important institutions, for instance, to make them less risky. But it would give creditors an incentive to pay close attention to the creditworthiness of systemically important institutions. And it would give the managers of these institutions a reason to file for bankruptcy before the house of cards crumbled, rather than running to regulators to beg for money. ♦

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Scuffy the Tugboat

Picture Perfect

Why Golden Books are golden

BY CLAUDIA ANDERSON

It may not have been quite Periclean Athens or Florence under the Medicis, but the eruption of creativity that constituted the quarter-century ascendancy of the Little Golden Books was dazzling enough in its own right, a remarkable convergence of artistic and commercial genius. The exhibition now touring the country of 60 original paintings for this lavishly illustrated children's book line—astonishingly vibrant works of art in their own right—tells a multilayered story of American popular culture at its best.

It begins in 1942, when Simon and Schuster's Little Golden Books burst upon the publishing scene and into the nurseries of America. Printed on fairly good paper, with cardboard covers and the trademark golden element on the cover (later the spine), the books were priced at 25 cents, one-sixth to one-eighth of what the Babar books or *Mike Mulligan and His Steam Shovel* were then selling for. Drugstores, five-and-dimes, and train stations willing to sell them were given special display racks. Within five months, the first dozen titles, mostly folk tales and nursery rhymes and prayers in the public domain, had sold a million and a half copies, and *The Poky Little Puppy*, illustrated by Gustaf Tenggren, was on its way to becoming the best-selling English-language children's picture book of all time.

Golden Legacy
Original Art from 65 Years of Golden Books

That was only the beginning. In 1947, the Little Goldens appeared in supermarkets. Available and affordable in towns too small to have a bookstore, they democratized quality picture books for children. By 1959, more than 150 titles had sold over a million copies each.

The editors had a wealth of talent to draw on. New York was teeming with refugees from the war in Europe, among them accomplished artists. Tibor Gergely would illustrate over 70 Golden Books (the larger line of which the Little Goldens were probably the most successful format), among them *The Great Big Fire Engine Book*, *Tootle*, and *Scuffy the Tugboat*. He was born in Budapest and drew caricatures for Viennese newspapers before emi-

Claudia Anderson is managing editor of THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

SCUFFY THE TUGBOAT AND HIS ADVENTURES DOWNRIVER, COPYRIGHT 1945

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grating to the United States in 1939.

Feodor Rojankovsky was a graduate of the Moscow Fine Arts Academy. Wounded during service in the Russian infantry in World War I, he sketched and painted war scenes that became his first published art. He worked in Poland, then Paris in the 1930s, fleeing to America after the fall of France in 1940. His *The Three Bears* bristles with Russianness, planting in young Boomer minds an image of the quintessential wooden *dacha* in the woods.

Garth Williams fled Britain around the time of the Blitz. Though better known as the illustrator of E.B. White's *Stuart Little* and of the 1953 edition of the Little House books, he chose to devote some of his energies to Little Golden Books, where economies of scale permitted extensive use of color. His *Baby Animals* were so exquisite that my mother dismembered the book and framed the baby seal and baby monkey and tiger cub to hang in my bedroom. Williams was paired with the Little Golden Books' most gifted writer, Margaret Wise Brown, in the inimitable *Mister Dog*, one of the first Little Golden Books to be published in French. It appeared in 1952 as *Monsieur Chien*.

Another pool of talent was refugees from the animation studios in California. Artists like Aurelius Battaglia (*Little Boy with a Big Horn*), Mary Blair (*I Can Fly*), and Alice and Martin Provensen (*The Color Kittens*, *Mr. Noah and His Family*) were alumni of either Disney or the Walter Lantz Studio, creator of Woody Woodpecker. They were ready to spread their creative wings, and did so in some of the best-loved Little Golden Books, as well as in works for other series. (The Provensens' superb and inexplicably out-of-print illustrated children's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*—not represented in the traveling show—was a Giant Golden Book.)

Then there were assorted individual artists of various background. Eloise Wilkin, a Rochester mother of four, called her subject matter "the small child in the daily rounds of his activities." The exhibition includes delicate watercolors of hers for *Baby Listens* and *My Little Golden Book About God*: a small boy discovering a bird's nest; two children on a sunlit beach awed by a flight of gulls.

The great Leonard Weisgard—who painted covers for the *New Yorker* before he was 20 and whose half-century career ranged far and wide—illustrated another Margaret Wise Brown classic, *Pussy Willow*, for Little Golden Books. Even more arresting than his painting of the soft grey kitten peering up between grasses and wild strawberries at a grasshopper in flight is his picture for *Indian, Indian*: a black-haired, clay-colored little boy encountering a recumbent white horse with flowing mane, full of power and grace, in a field of daisies.

It is surprising how undated these pictures are. A few images and titles are politically incorrect by present standards. *Doctor Dan the Bandage Man*'s counterpart is, I'm afraid, *Nurse Nancy*. And the traditional family ideal implicit in *We Help Mommy*, *We Help Daddy*, and *The Happy Family*—whose cover shows a girl in a dress picking flowers from a flower bed and a boy pushing a hand mower across the surrounding lawn—has taken a beating in the decades since these books appeared. Mostly, though, the Little Goldens dealt in timeless themes. They were fairy tales and folk tales, animal stories and childish fantasy.

The Color Kittens

THE COLOR KITTENS, COPYRIGHT 1949

And such illustrations! While the range of visual styles is wide, the pictures in the traveling show are characterized by a vitality and an artistic maturity seldom encountered today in inexpensive mass-market products for preschoolers. Masterly use of color and fine attention to detail, expression, and background are other common features. The feeling for nature palpable in so many of these works reflects an age when more artists grew up amid farms and streams and forests.

That these marvelous paintings have been unearthed and taken on the road, for the nostalgic delight of aging Boomers, and the edification of their offspring, is largely due to one man. The idea came from Leonard Marcus, a historian of children's literature and himself a Boomer nurtured on Golden Books.

With a biography of Margaret Wise Brown already under his belt, Marcus produced *Golden Legacy: How Golden Books Won Children's Hearts, Changed Publishing Forever, and Became An American Icon Along the Way* in time for the 65th anniversary of the Little series. Mulling a possible exhibition, he traveled to Racine, Wisconsin, home of the Western Printing Company, Simon and Schuster's partner in the production of the Golden Books.

"On the nondescript edge of town," he told me, he was taken into a "vast, hangar-like warehouse with industrial shelving floor to ceiling" stacked with envelopes containing the original art. Forget Athens and Florence. Said Marcus, "I felt as if I were entering King Tut's tomb."

Already affiliated with another institution—the National Center for Children's Illustrated Literature, in Abilene, Texas—whose mission includes sending exhibitions of children's book art on tour around the country, Marcus got busy. With himself and Diane Muldrow of Golden Books as co-curators, the Abilene center mounted the show, which opened there in November 2007. Today, the center handles booking and uses its own trucks to transport the pieces from city to city, for 10-week stays at a cost of only $5,000 to the hosting museum or library, shipping included.

Booked nearly solid through January 2012, "Golden Legacy" opened at the Joslyn Art Museum in Omaha on June 6. It is slated to be seen later in Amherst, Massachusetts; Wauconda, Illinois; Weslaco, Texas; Chicago; Richmond; Salt Lake City;

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and Greenville, South Carolina.

Its last stop was the Enoch Pratt Free Library in Baltimore, where Ellen Riordan, children's services coordinator, called it "far and away the most successful show we've had," with intergenerational appeal.

A visitor's sole disappointment was that the works on display included just a picture or two from favorite books. Leonard Marcus concedes, "We give token representation to artists who deserve their own shows." Recalling that pharaonic warehouse filled with treasures—all subsequently acquired by Random House and moved two years ago to storage in Connecticut—he adds, "This exhibition could've been a thousand times as big."

If only! ♦

Founders Keepers

How mortal men produced an immortal Constitution.

BY JAMES M. BANNER JR.

The two great public documents of our early national history are the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution.

The first sings with rhetorical grandeur and moral and political aspiration. The second, except for its preamble, possesses about as much stylistic appeal as a real estate contract. It is, after all, a frame of government, not a justification of political independence. Yet the Constitution, for all its plain style and many defects, has undergirded the emergence of a singular, democratic, open society that inspires the hopes and aspirations of people everywhere. As amended, it is the longest-lived written national frame of government in the world, making the United States a 21st-century nation governed by an 18th-century constitution.

Plain, Honest Men
The Making of the American Constitution
by Richard Beeman
Random House, 544 pp., $30

In calling the Constitution "the most wonderful work ever struck off by the brain and purpose of man," William Gladstone was thinking of what the Constitution had wrought by the time he wrote those words in 1878—the sustained governance of a continental republic that had survived a brutal civil war. But in our own day, others of the document's strengths have become clearer.

Take, for instance, its taut brevity and, as a contrary example, the twice-defeated draft constitution of the European Union. The European text was first over 500, then (even when reduced) over 300, pages long, impossible to absorb and understand. And it required unanimity to go into effect. By contrast, the Constitution of 1787 (without the Bill of Rights) prints to roughly 10 pages, and it became operational in 1788 when 9 of 13 states had ratified it. The choice of linguistic directness and attention to political strategy were surely among the Framers' wisest decisions. The Constitution's very brevity and open-endedness provoke unceasing debate—the strength of any open society; and its simplicity invites legislative and judicial interpretation—both being the very essence of a living constitution.

Such reflections, however, are not the concern of Richard Beeman, and we can see why. He has his hands full simply setting down the full story of the Constitution's creation. The result is a stunning achievement. This is the first full-length history of the Philadelphia Convention in over 40 years and easily the best and most comprehensive treatment of its subject ever written.

It's hard enough to get the story straight. It's no easier to capture what little drama the tale holds, for the convention was nothing if not an extended debate fest, an arena for long speeches and impassioned words—perhaps the greatest in history—but not exactly a scene designed to hold the attention of our faster-paced and image-saturated age. Yet Beeman manages to bring the convention's characters alive and to keep our attention fixed on what was at stake each summer day in a manner that the Framers themselves would have admired—with economy and clarity of expression.

Catherine Drinker Bowen's classic *Miracle at Philadelphia* has long introduced Americans to the fabled story of the Constitution's origins. In 2007, David O. Stewart's short, deft *Summer of 1787* became the first narrative history since Bowen's. Beeman's purpose, however, differs from that of these taletellers, and it gains over Bowen's because of the wealth of new documentation and scholarship available since her work was published in 1966.

Any history of the constitutional convention must naturally follow a narrative arc; it has to relate how only as the days passed one by one in that fateful summer did the document we know and the government it established gradually take form, detail by detail, decision by decision. The trick is to convey the significance of what occurred at each step without letting analysis or too much detail bog down the story's flow. Here, Beeman is at his best.

He believes that what occurred that summer was "the revolution of 1787." In using that term, he puts himself in opposition to the camp of Charles A. Beard, whose 1913 *Economic Interpretation of the Constitution of the United States* depicted the Constitution as the product of a class- and property-based counterrevolution against the feared radicalism

James M. Banner Jr. is a historian in Washington and cofounder of the National History Center.

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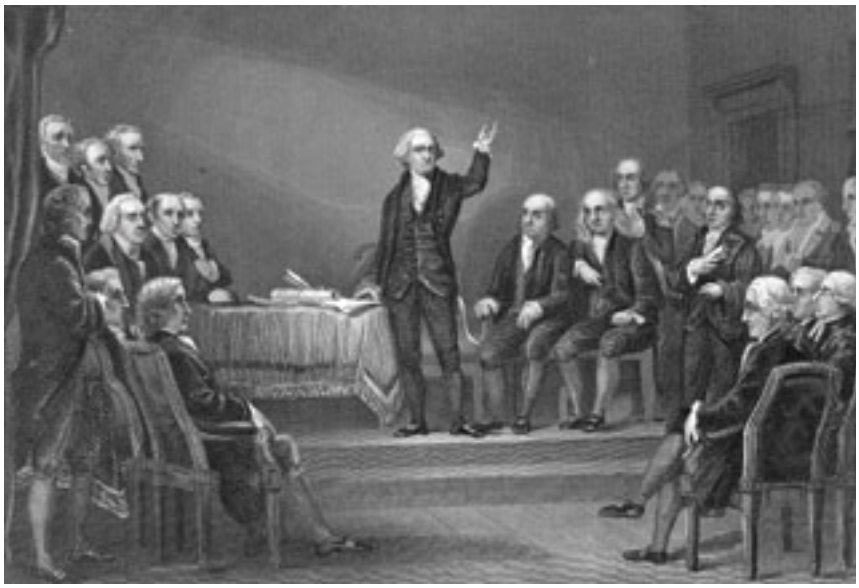
of the more populist state legislatures. Beeman argues stoutly, if not at length, that seeing the convention's members as reacting against democratic forces and illegally ignoring the Articles of Confederation is misguided because it misconstrues both the situation the Framers faced and the significance of the Constitution's ratification.

The reasoning of Beard and his followers, writes the author, is "dubious" because the Articles were only a "league of friendship" and of "amity and commerce" between polities, much like a treaty that could be broken. This was no illegal coup against an existing, workable government. Moreover, the product of the Convention was only the Framers' "opinion" as to what should become a new frame of government. It would not take effect until the people of the states, in specially convened ratifying conventions, had approved it.

Beeman might have gone on to point out that, even if you think the Constitution represented a counterrevolution, it was a counterrevolution accepted by the people acting through those ratifying conventions, the most democratically elected bodies ever convened before.

Beeman embeds such arguments so modestly in the text that you can easily miss their composite force. You're left most of the time to draw from his lucid account what you will. One has to be struck, for example, by Beeman's implied theme of just how much of the Constitution we owe to a kind of inadvertence. The Framers were always actuated by the need to solve a particular problem, not to test a theory or apply a principle. Yet out of problem-solving emerged enduring mechanisms of constitutional government.

Such is the case with the Framers' invention of divided sovereignty—what we know of as federalism. At first, the Framers were perplexed by how to maintain state polities within a new, national system of governance. That challenge had never existed before. Some, like Virginia's Edmund Randolph, argued that "we ought to be one Nation." Others, like New Jersey's William Paterson, were appalled at the thought of the states' surrendering their sovereign authority. When Pennsylvania's John Dickinson realized that it might be possible to mix national and federal elements in the same system, even so astute a thinker as James Madison dismissed the idea. But as we know, Dickinson's conception of a federal system gradually took root as the solution to an otherwise insoluble political deadlock. What started as the search for the answer to a challenge became a widely copied principle of government.



George Washington addresses the delegates

GETTY IMAGES

Throughout his history, Beeman treats the work of the Framers as an extended engagement with such complex matters of government, not of ideology or economic and class interests. If, as he argues, the convention indeed wrought a revolution, like all revolutions its end was not in its beginning. Compromise—among divergent political philosophies, sections, economic interests, and individual ambition—was always the order of the day if a new constitutional order were to replace the Articles.

Among the convention's 55 delegates were those, like Madison and George Washington, who designed the template from which they hoped the final document would emerge only to find themselves, in the end, forced to accept a plan that they could not have conceived of earlier. Almost from the start, they could not control the outcome and had to cede ground before the Constitution was sent to the people for ratification.

Even though most delegates were members of the nation's well-educated, wealthy, cosmopolitan elite and deeply steeped in learning about ancient and modern government, they were also keenly attuned to the differing circumstances of their own states and those for whom they spoke, and thus had to find grounds for acceptable compromise with people of dissimilar political views and hopes.

Critically, most of them were comparatively young and of the generation that had fought the Revolution. They would inherit responsibility for making the new government work; many would seek and gain office in it. Consequently, many had much at stake in the summer's outcome. Twenty-five of them owned slaves—a fact that bore heavily on every major feature of the Constitution and marked American government and society to our own day. All were fallible, unable to escape their own social and cultural status, reluctant to risk their own interests. Each, as Beeman portrays them, was distinctive—some dyspeptic, some wise, some voluble, others silent, many respected, others disliked, but most making contributions, many of them signal, to the outcome.

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They were humans, not demigods.

Few are unfamiliar with the major compromises that marked the system the Framers designed: the compromise between large and small states that resulted in a bicameral congress, each house differently constituted; the fateful compromise over slavery, in which three-fifths of the slaves were counted toward House representation; and the lesser adjustments over the election of the president (among the most perplexing and hard-fought features). But it comes as a surprise—and in emphasizing such matters Beeman puts himself in rare company among historians—to learn how the Framers' simple decision to allow all votes to be taken in a Committee of the Whole allowed all of their early decisions to be reopened and adjusted. Procedure mattered.

One must also be struck to see Washington, so often taken to be a ramrod figure of unbending seriousness, using Philadelphia's social circuit with political shrewdness to sow ideas, ease colleagues' fears, and work out solutions to convention deadlocks. In fact, not unlike the case in the nation's capital and state capitals today, conversations oiled by drink in the taverns and saloons of Philadelphia were as important to the final outcome as were formal convention debates.

True to form, a few days before adjourning, and with the end to their exhausting labors in sight, 55 Framers celebrated (Beeman reports) by consuming "fifty-four bottles of Madeira, sixty bottles of claret, fifty bottles of 'old stock,' copious quantities of porter, beer, cider, and some large bowls of rum punch." Fortunately, the Framers' heavy work was by then behind them.

So far in the background does Beeman stay that it would be easy to miss what he has accomplished. In a kind of plainsong style, without advancing any overarching interpretation, keeping debates among historians for the footnotes, he has given us a straightforward, authoritative, narrative history of a gathering and an outcome whose claims on our public life are never in doubt. His achievement is unlikely to be surpassed. ♦

Rhyme with Reason

The poetry's the thing in Shakespeare's sonnets.

BY EDWIN M. YODER JR.

The 400th anniversary of the first publication of Shakespeare's sonnets slipped silently by, all but unnoticed, in late May and early this month. But that is perhaps routine, since like all things Shakespearian, his sonnets are hedged in still-unsolved mystery.

That was the case more than 50 years ago in Bingham Hall, in Chapel Hill, when I underwent my first serious encounter with these magnificent, mysterious poems. Our mentor in the senior English majors' Shakespeare course was Peter Phialas, who had earned his Yale doctorate editing one of the plays for the original Yale Press edition. He knew his stuff. I pause to offer him this salute across the years.

English studies then featured two theories of poetic interpretation, with contradictory implications for the study of the sonnets. Their autobiographical suggestiveness, their anchorage in the late Elizabethan age, seemed obvious. Leslie Hotson, a ranking scholar, had recently established—to his satisfaction—that a line like "the mortal moon hath her eclipse endured" (Sonnet 107) alluded to the recent defeat of the Spanish Armada, whose formation was crescent-shaped before the "Protestant wind" blew it apart.

There were, Hotson argued, other dim if discernible allusions to papal monuments recently constructed in Rome and to the assassination of a French king. Or did the line about the "mortal moon," as others suggested, make veiled reference to the approaching end of Queen Elizabeth's long reign? As certainly the implicit cast of the story the sonnets told—of a beautiful youth resisting marriage, a treacherous "dark lady," the mistress of the speaking poet of the poems, and the moody poet himself—seemed to tell a story that went beyond the merely imaginary.

It was an intriguing thought that the biographically scanted Shakespeare of Stratford had teasingly lifted the scrim of anonymity by offering fleeting nods to current events. The autobiographical theory still has its adherents, though none so cocksure as the historian A. L. Rowse, who trumpeted some 30 years ago that he had identified the poet's "dark lady," only to get his ears pinned back. It was a lesson in modesty for us all.

Meanwhile, for us apprentice critics in Bingham Hall, there was at play a countervailing poetic theory, called the New Criticism, new precisely in its defiance of poetic historicity. Its cardinal doctrine was that all great poetry is essentially contemporaneous in texture; the era and idiom in which a great poet writes are less important than his artistry.

The canonical text was Cleanth Brooks's *Well Wrought Urn* (1947). Brooks admonished us that verse worth remembering and treasuring is continuous with an unbroken tradition stretching forward from the Elizabethan age, called "metaphysical" by Samuel Johnson because it celebrates wit, irony, intricacy, paradox, and wordplay. Moreover, proclaimed William Empson, another founder of the New Criticism, there are "seven types of ambiguity," no less, so that the merit of great poetry is a capacity to yield various glosses and thus inspire argument.

So which theory, if either, offers a master key to the sonnets? The documented facts are few. The sonnets were first mentioned by one Francis Meres

Edwin M. Yoder Jr., a former editor and columnist in Washington, is the author, most recently, of Lions at Lamb House.

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in 1598, reporting that Shakespeare, already known as an actor and playwright, was circulating "sugar'd sonnets" among his "private friends"—how many he didn't say. The playhouses had been closed five years earlier by the plague; and scholars speculate that Shakespeare improved his leisure by writing two brilliant narrative poems based on classical and mythic sources and those "sugar'd" sonnets.

It seems questionable that Meres himself read them; otherwise, he would have found plenty of salt and wormwood in the mix along with the sugar. Publication of all 154 sonnets came a decade later. The quarto edition, the only one in Shakespeare's lifetime, was entered with the Stationer's Register on May 20, 1609, and presumably printed shortly thereafter. The quarto bore the famously tantalizing dedication to "the onlie begetter of these ensuing sonnets, Mr. W.H." Who this W.H. was, and whether he and the publisher Thomas Thorpe pirated the poems, remains in dispute. The guessing game goes on.

The sonnets' subsequent history is a tangled tale. But for me, half-a-century after that first encounter under Peter Phialas's tutelage, the charm of these poems lies in their matchless verbal intricacy and depth. The argument over the supposed historical and autobiographical echoes, however intriguing, seems distinctly secondary.

Much the thorniest issue the sonnets raise is that the first 126 were clearly written to, and about, a young man, possibly the Earl of Southampton. Southampton was then an underaged ward of the state, exasperating his widowed mother and the powerful Lord Burghley by refusing three lucrative suits of marriage, only to impregnate and marry one of Elizabeth's ladies in waiting.

She was furious and threw him into prison, where he stayed until the next reign. No one in Shakespeare's time seems to have fretted over the homoerotic overtones, whether autobiographical or merely conventional, although by the 19th century some editors recoiled in horror and tried to disguise the young male addressee as a woman. My own notion is that Shakespeare (with other transcendent artists) created a new category, which we might call "omnisexuality."

The lesson I gather from all the fascinating dither—obviously, my immersion in the New Criticism proved to be indelible—is the error of what psychologists call "concrete thinking." Or in the formulation of the philosopher Gilbert Ryle, a "category mistake." The sonnets are not a discursive narrative, whatever they hint at by way of real-world acts and emotions. They are poetry, a created form. The poet who created Hamlet, Macbeth, Lear, and Falstaff, and scores of other living characters, was fully capable of spinning an artful yarn involving a beautiful youth, a dark, treacherous mistress (with hairs like wires!), and hanging on that frame his imperishable musings on love, loyalty, lust, jealousy, envy, longing, betrayal, joy and sorrow, death and the immortality of art ("Not marble nor the gilded monuments of princes shall outlive this powerful rhyme").

That many of these themes and tropes were conventional is not to the point. Here, as everywhere else, what Shakespeare touched he touched with magic. The dramatist who could transform stale historical chronicles into art could transmute every base metal. That is surely the key point, four centuries later. ♦

Speech Impediment

Big Brother is actually a Canadian bureaucrat.

BY MICHAEL TAUBE

Ezra Levant is not a household name to most Americans. He's spent most of his career in Calgary, working in the fields of Canadian conservative politics, journalism, think-tanks and law. But if you read this book and hear his story, it's unlikely you will soon forget his invaluable contribution to the contemporary literature of freedom of thought and individual liberty. (Full disclosure: Ezra Levant is a friend of long standing.)

Shakedown
How Our Government is Undermining Democracy in the Name of Human Rights
by Ezra Levant
McClelland & Stewart,
232 pp., $25.95

In February 2006, Levant was the publisher of a conservative magazine, the *Western Standard*. After some consideration, he decided to reprint the Danish cartoons of the Prophet Mohammed "to show our readers what all the fuss was about." It was a gutsy move. Whereas most Canadian publications decided against publishing them, Levant thought people should be free to look at these cartoons in print and judge for themselves.

This decision changed the course of his life, especially after a heated radio interview about the cartoons with Syed Soharwardy, a Calgary imam. Described in *Shakedown* as a "Pakistani-born, madrassah-trained preacher popular on the Saudi lecture circuit who is the president of the Islamic Supreme Council of Canada," Soharwardy launched a complaint with a human rights commission (HRC) in Alberta following a failed attempt to get Levant arrested by the Calgary police.

What's an HRC? It was originally supposed to deal with a relatively mundane issue: helping poor Canadians deal with landlords and employers who, they felt, were infringing on their civil rights. Plaintiffs acquired the *pro bono* service of a government lawyer, and the ultimate goal was to

Michael Taube is a columnist for the Calgary Herald.

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settle through mediation or (in worst-case scenarios) set up a tribunal. As Levant writes, HRCs "were a beautiful idea—that failed."

Today, HRCs are the equivalent of kangaroo courts used predominantly by the Canadian left to sue political rivals and soothe the hurt feelings of residents of glass houses. *Shakedown* details some of the more ridiculous human rights cases that have succeeded in Canada—and sadly, the vast majority of cases have succeeded:

- The Rev. Stephen Boissoin, who wrote a letter opposing homosexuality in an Alberta newspaper, was ordered to "cease publishing in newspapers, by email, on the radio, in public speeches, or on the Internet, in future, disparaging remarks about gays and homosexuals."
- A Muslim police cadet was awarded $500,000 (Canadian) for, among other things, being shouted at by a drill sergeant whose job it was to—well, shout at him.
- A British Columbia transsexual who was turned down as a rape crisis counselor (since women are only supposed to aid female rape victims) won his/her case and had his/her hurt feelings soothed.

For his part, Levant was furious. Soharwardy's complaint was an attack not only on Levant's freedom of speech, but also on his basic journalistic right to report the news as he saw fit. Yet if he refused the Alberta HRC's "invitation" to appear before it, officials would be legally allowed to enter his office without a search warrant to seize any "records and documents, including electronic records and documents, that are or may be relevant to the subject matter of the investigation."

Levant decided to fight back. He videotaped his hearing with the human rights officer, Shirley McGovern, and posted some revealing clips on YouTube. McGovern's initial hesitation about the taping (which had been approved beforehand), and then allowing it to proceed, was, as Levant writes, "a decision she would come to regret." Hundreds of thousands of people watched the YouTube videos and were shocked by what they saw.

McGovern's blasé attitude toward the proceedings—"I always ask people . . . what was your intent and purpose of your article?" and "You're entitled to your opinions, that's for sure"—made her look foolish, while Levant looked like a crusader for free speech and human rights, noting that "the government has no legal or moral authority to interrogate me or anyone else for publishing these words and pictures."

Parliament buildings, Ottawa

NEWSCOM

It soon became clear these human rights commissions had nothing to do with human rights but were the first-line defense of the left-wing agenda against the rights and freedoms of opposing doctrines. Levant's case became a *cause célèbre*: Conservatives, liberals, and more than a few socialists strongly supported his right to free speech, whether they agreed with him or not, and Alan Borovoy, general counsel for the Canadian Civil Liberties Association, noted that "during the years when my colleagues and I were laboring to create such commissions, we never imagined that they might ultimately be used against freedom of speech."

The silent Canadian media, print and electronic, suddenly seized the opportunity to blast away at the concept of "human rights commissions," McGovern resigned from the case, and Soharwardy dropped his complaint.

Levant's particular ordeal with the Alberta HRC also helped change the direction of another high profile case against Mark Steyn. The Ontario HRC was going to hear a complaint by the Canadian Islamic Congress against *Maclean's* for reprinting portions of Steyn's book, *America Alone*. The matter was ultimately dropped—but not before the commission issued a pugnacious statement that groups should always be able "to challenge any institution that contributes to the dissemination of destructive, xenophobic opinions."

Shakedown might well shock your senses; it certainly will make you shudder about Canada's lackadaisical support for free speech. Mark Steyn, who has written *Shakedown*'s introduction, calls Levant "a true Canadian hero." I'll take it one step further: He's a true hero for all people, and societies, who love freedom. ♦

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Horn of Plenty

Prez, Trane, Sonny—and Alan Greenspan?

BY JOE QUEENAN

History is filled with many exciting "What ifs?"

Upon graduation from military school in 1785, Napoleon Bonaparte applied for a post in the British Navy. He was rejected. As a young man, Josef Stalin actively laid the groundwork for becoming a priest. Things did not work out the way he had hoped. Che Guevara and Fidel Castro both started out as medical students; Adolf Hitler dreamed of becoming an architect.

How different history might have been had any of these individuals achieved his youthful aspirations!

One of the great what-ifs in recent history involves Alan Greenspan. Complicit in one of the greatest economic collapses ever, Greenspan has now been exposed as utterly bereft of the skills needed to helm the Federal Reserve. He was too indulgent, took too many risks, suffered from too much self-confidence and perhaps even hubris. Yet few Americans are aware that a career forecasting GDP and setting interest rates and tamping down the nation's money supply was not Greenspan's dream as a child. Rather, he dreamed of growing up to be a jazz musician.

Had those dreams borne fruit, the global financial system might never have been brought to its knees.

Here are the known facts. Midway through World War II Greenspan enrolled at Juilliard but soon dropped out and took a job with a roving dance band. His instrument of choice was the tenor saxophone. At this point, the story becomes murky, as the Maestro himself has divulged few details about this period. The official version is that, after playing alongside the immortal Stan Getz, young Greenspan decided that he did not have what it took to excel as a jazz musician and chose to direct his talents elsewhere.

Shortly after packing it in, he launched his second career as an economist. From that point onward, Alan Greenspan rarely mentioned his original vocation.

Recently, new light on Greenspan's jazz years has emerged. The data suggest that, far from being a mediocrity who had no chance of ever making it big, Greenspan was a supple and dexterous improviser on the tenor sax who possessed a silky tone reminiscent of Lester Young. Those who heard him play insist that he could easily have made his mark had he soldiered on.

In his kiss-and-tell autobiography—*Ridin' Raunchy on the Chitlin Circuit*—the legendary sideman Snooky Parnell remembers the young Greenspan as an extraordinarily imaginative soloist with a lustrous *vibrato* who introduced the concept of the inverted nonchromatic arpeggio to jazz music.

"The Green Man [his nickname at the time] always played his arpeggios back to front, and in the subtonic key, which forced the listener to rethink his assumptions about where a solo should go," recalls Parnell, who played bass with Miles Davis, Art Tatum, and Thelonious Monk.

> Greenie played sax the way Piccaso painted, like he was some sort of Cubist or something, breaking up everything into its distinct parts. The dude had chops. Yeah, people thought it was funny that this string-bean Jewish kid would be the one to bust jazz out of its straitjacket, but that's the way it is. Pretty soon, Ben Webster started imitating him, Sonny Stitt started imitating him, Hank Mobley started imitating him. Greenie literally turned the jazz arpeggio on its head. He also turned Getz on to the *bossa nova*. No lie.

Parnell is not the only jazz legend to pay tribute to Greenspan's long overlooked skills. In the recent PBS documentary *Cut That Rug, Jitterbug!* Carmine Napolitano, owner of San Francisco's legendary Café Tropicana, recalls with amazement a 22-verse solo Greenspan once took on "Someday My Prince Will Come" while he was filling in with Charlie Mingus's octet.

"Mingus's regular sax player came down with the flu this one particular evening, and Greenie was across town playing in Maynard Ferguson's big band," recalls Napolitano.

The Maestro, 1962

TIME & LIFE PICTURES / GETTY IMAGES

> Maynard was okay with cutting him loose for the night, thinking he would only be subbing in for that one gig. But Greenie went in there and blew the roof off the room. He's a big guy—massive chest—with an unusually large diaphragm, so he could really cook. The crowd loved it, and even Mingus, who was notoriously hard to please, ate it up. Greenspan toured Europe with Mingus for the next two years. Maynard never forgave Charlie.

Joe Queenan is the author, most recently, of Closing Time: A Memoir.

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Why, then, did Greenspan abandon a career that had started with such tremendous promise?

"What you have to understand about the Green Man is that he is very competitive," says Snooky Parnell, "the type of guy who couldn't stand the thought that anyone was better than him. It's easy to tighten up on M1 or M2; that's kid's stuff. But tenor sax—well, he had Rollins, Stitt, Getz, Dexter Gordon, and of course ole Trane himself lined up in front of him. And it just drove Greenie crazy to think that he was never going to be Numero Uno."

Napolitano was in the room the night Greenspan's supernova career fizzled out. It was September 14, 1949, and Greenspan found himself in the same Greenwich Village club as John Coltrane. Coltrane, a convivial sort, went out of his way to be friendly to the youngster, but Greenspan was having none of it. Sax at the ready, he challenged Coltrane to an onstage showdown. It was a mistake he would regret for the rest of his life.

"Trane smoked his ass," Parnell remembers. "Greenie foolishly tore into 'Cherokee,' Charlie Barnet's old standby, but Trane knew that tune inside out from his days in Kansas City. Greenie tried to keep up, but no chance. Trane didn't rile easily, but something about the way Greenie carried himself didn't suit John. Trane took him apart."

Stung by the humiliation, Greenspan began playing his horn every night on the Williamsburg Bridge. One night, Sonny Rollins, arriving from his own thrashing at Coltrane's hands, turned up on the bridge and told Greenspan to shove off. The two got into a shoving match that ended only when a young Russian immigrant separated them. Gently consoling the irate youngster, she invited him out for *blinis* at the Russian Tea Room.

The young woman was Ayn Rand, whose rough-and-tumble vision of capitalism is delineated in such classics as *Atlas Shrugged* and *The Fountainhead*. Intoxicated by the quirky Russian's paeans to the virtues of rough individualism and unfettered markets, Greenspan accompanied the young woman back to her apartment where he pulled out his sax and began to play "In a Sentimental Mood."

Rand listened patiently, and then told him: "I don't know much about jazz, but you're awfully reedy at the top of the register. Have you ever thought of trying something else? Economics, perhaps?"

The rest, as they say, is history—and today we are all paying for it. Snooky Parnell, now destitute at 89, lives in an East St. Louis nursing home after his 401(k) got wiped out. The irony is not lost on him.

"If Trane would have just laid off Greenie that night," he says, "I wouldn't be stuck in this mess. I know it's not right to speak ill of the dead, but I curse the day John Coltrane was born." ♦

Child Careless

The kids aren't all right, but what are the options?

BY JOAN FRAWLEY DESMOND

Single mothers moving out of public assistance, and low-income families searching for affordable child care, will applaud the $4 billion increase in stimulus funds for programs like Head Start, Early Head Start, and Child Care Development Block Grants, which support state programs for subsidized care. But it's far from certain whether the children who actually receive these services will be better off, and that's Penelope Leach's particular concern.

Child Care Today
Getting It Right for Everyone
by Penelope Leach
Knopf, 368 pp., $25.95

This British child development expert, the best-selling author of *Your Baby and Child: From Birth to Age Five*, has earned an international reputation for helping readers consider their offspring's point of view on matters like infant sleep disturbances and potty training. This new volume also offers a child-centered perspective, but Leach has moved out of the nursery and stands ready to make her mark on an entrenched ideological debate that asks whether nonmaternal child care helps or harms young children.

Actually, she thinks that's the wrong question to initiate a discussion on a contentious subject. Readers must first consider, she says, "what kind of care, where, by whom, for which children, from what age, for what hours, paid for by whom, and with what results?"

Designed for concerned parents and interested policymakers, *Child Care Today* explores every element of the child-care picture—sometimes to a tedious degree. Like any good lobbyist, Leach prods her readers to rethink their complacency; a portion of the book compares our ad hoc, tough love practices with more predictable "top down" policies in enlightened European nations.

Leach bemoans the grim consequences of Americans' conflicted feelings about child care: From the scarcity of paid maternal leave, to the small pool of strong programs for at-risk preschoolers, to the spasms of guilt suffered by working mothers. Leach is clearly impressed with the "supply-driven" policies of some European nations that secure provisions like high-quality universal

Joan Frawley Desmond, who writes on religious and social issues for a variety of publications, lives in Maryland.

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child care and allowances for at-home mothers. But this practical work isn't a stealth argument for the construction of a social welfare state: Leach realizes that the political and cultural framework that supports Sweden's day care regime doesn't exist here.

Still, she wants readers to come to grips with an unpleasant truth: Much of American day care is just plain "bad." Given the available options, infants in particular are better off at home with their mother, a family member, or a nanny. Working mothers of very young children express greater satisfaction with in-home care, in part because caregiver/infant ratios remain too high in most affordable group programs. That problem can delay the developmental milestones of underprivileged children already at risk because of family instability.

This is especially relevant for American families. About 12 percent of three-month-olds here are placed in day care, and another 24 percent are in family day care, where small groups of children are cared for in private homes. Though British child care practices track most closely with our own, fewer than one percent of three-month-olds attend day care in Great Britain, and just one percent are brought to family day care. Comparisons between American and other Western European practices are even more striking.

American parents with toddlers have more options. Still, Leach cautions readers to assume nothing: Each child's needs should be assessed individually, and the staff and practices of available programs must be scrutinized. Children's needs would also be better served if we addressed the poor academic qualifications and high turnover of the staff at many American centers for older children.

Leach respects the passionate instinct of mothers to guard their young, whatever their child-care decisions. Indeed, maternal possessiveness leads some working mothers to choose sub-par care in order to prevent their child from establishing closer bonds with the hired help. But she sets such mothers straight: Warm, competent caregivers can't dislodge a child's primary attachment to his parents.

The larger point is that mothers are fully in charge of decisions about child care. While Leach devotes a chapter to the increasing role of fathers in the nursery—a trend likely to accelerate as women outpace men in obtaining college degrees—single mothers now account for almost 40 percent of live births in the United States. If anything, these developments *increase* the urgency of improving affordable child care for the working poor. Leach finds it "shameful" that family finances, rather than maternal preferences, drive child-care choices here, and she opposes welfare-to-work programs that press single mothers with young children to enter the workforce and ignore the scarcity of decent child care.

Much of American day care is just plain "bad." Given the available options, infants in particular are better off at home with their mother, a family member, or a nanny.

There are bright spots, of course. Over the years studies of a handful of model programs, such as the Perry Preschool Project, have established a direct correlation between early intervention for at-risk children and their subsequent ability to stay employed and out of trouble as adults. Politicians lobbying for universal preschool often cite the Perry Project results. But Leach says it's a mistake to conflate the outcomes of "state-of-the-art remedial programs" with the limited impact of programs designed for ordinary children: "Applying the data from the highly resourced experience of a small group of at-risk preschoolers to all children is questionable."

Leach is generally supportive of Head Start, and Early Head Start, which targets low-income mothers and infants. But she freely explores their problems, too. In fact, Head Start doesn't come cheap—annual, full-time costs top $22,000 per child—and several studies conducted by the Department of Health and Human Services have concluded that Head Start's initially positive impact appears short-lived. In 2007 the program's advocates convinced Congress to discontinue the National Reporting System, which was designed to review the outcomes of individual centers, making it almost impossible to identify and promote the best practices of solid operations.

Such moves don't inspire confidence. Leach cites Sharon Ramey, director of the Center on Health and Education at Georgetown, who worries about the "culture of silence and defeatism that has crept" into discussions between experts in the field. Ramey contends that child care advocates and researchers are

> fearful that criticism of existing standards and the quality of publicly funded programs, such as subsidized child care for welfare-to-work families and Head Start and pre-K public-school programs, will lead to a total withdrawal of any public support for very low-income families or those with two working parents.

Well, federal funding for Head Start, and for child-care subsidies for low-income families, has actually *increased*; but you could make a case for putting an expansion of state-funded child care on hold until policymakers address the systemic problems of existing programs. It's more likely, however, that bureaucratic ineptitude, entrenched ideological positions, and a deep-seated American resistance to "top-down" solutions—enlightened or not—will leave the status quo essentially unchanged.

Penelope Leach will be scandalized, and who can blame her? ♦

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Arms and the Men

There are many reasons why the Turks didn't take Vienna. **BY ANN MARLOWE**

The heart may sink a bit reading the Introduction to *The Enemy at the Gate*: "This book is first of all about Europe's fear of the Turks and then, by the end, about fear itself."

This book "is not a straightforward *history*" (italics Andrew Wheatcroft's) but it soon becomes evident that the trendy posturing is skin-deep. Wheatcroft has, thankfully, not lived up to his promise to write about "fear itself." His fourth book is primarily a military history of the clashes between the Habsburg and Ottoman Empires in the 17th century, the fruit of more than 20 years researching the field. If anything, it is old-fashioned in its emphasis on day-to-day battlefield action, with little about the economic life of the two empires or behind-the-scenes political maneuvering.

The Enemy at the Gate
Habsburgs, Ottomans and the Battle for Europe
by Andrew Wheatcroft
Basic, 384 pp., $27.50

Some of the most suggestive material here is on military organization, equipment, and tactics. Wheatcroft tracks the burgeoning use of grenades (named for their resemblance to pomegranates and giving their name to a new military branch, the grenadiers) and the bayonet, a new weapon particularly useful in defending against Ottoman cavalry. The Europeans who besieged Buda in the 1680s brought "wicker gabions to be filled with earth in front of the Ottoman lines"—ancestors of today's Hescos.

It was by no means clear when the Turks besieged Vienna in 1683 that they fielded the less advanced army. Turkish flintlock muskets were more accurate than European matchlocks. The Turkish Janissary was "astonishingly versatile" as well, master of many weapons. But Janissaries had "no uniformity of equipment nor did they march in step like Western soldiers."

Beneath the surface, however, the West was pulling ahead of the East. For the Turks, "bravery and skill in arms" were emphasized, while in the West, "discipline and good order" were valued more. The siege of Vienna was lifted when the Turks reacted to an unexpected flank attack by simply running away. The highly personalized nature of Turkish governance, and the absence of the rule of law, took their toll. A few years later the Turkish pasha defending Buda fought to the death, in part, because he knew he would be killed by the Sultan if he lost the fortress. Thousands of Turkish soldiers died unnecessary deaths as well.

Some of this detail supports Victor Davis Hanson's thesis that Western organization trumps other ways of doing things. But Wheatcroft points out that the real strength of the Ottomans, even in their decline, was in their logistical ability: They were able to field huge armies and maintain their supplies better than the Habsburgs were able to organize their own defense.

Wheatcroft acknowledges, but makes little of, the issue of comparative literacy. The Turkish bow "was still a better weapon than any gun" of the 1680s but European artillery was much easier for the novice to master. The bow required strength and years of training, but musketeers could be trained in a few weeks with the aid of inexpensive drill books. Guess which empire didn't have those books because they didn't have printing presses? Wheatcroft does not mention that the first printing press in Turkey was established in 1721 but closed in 1742 after publishing all of 17 books, and the first newspaper was printed in 1831! A society where people from relatively humble backgrounds read books was vastly different, and more dynamic, than a society where literacy was mainly used to teach the Koran.

The one area where Wheatcroft makes good on his threat of not writing straightforward history is in organization. The narrative isn't well signposted. I had completely lost sight of what Charles of Lorraine was doing with his troops while conditions in besieged Vienna deteriorated, and the lead-up to the 1683 campaign moves backward and forward in time too often. The problem worsens as the narrative advances: The last third of this book feels hasty and poorly edited, with references explained pages later. At the end, there is a sudden shift away from the chronicle of battles to a compressed view of the cult of Prince Eugene and the legacy of Eugene and Charles of Lorraine in the Habsburg military.

This is fascinating material, but nothing prepares the reader for it, nor is it well integrated with the rest of the book. Wheatcroft seems to be preparing to make some very interesting claims about military history, but these are baldly stated with almost no argument or evidence.

He might also have done without a silly coda, where he attempts to present this book as an argument against alarmism in Europe about "a new Battle for Europe." He speaks of "two competing groups with unequal access to the means of producing history. . . . In that respect the Hapsburgs . . . held the best cards." But Europeans held the best cards because they had printing presses, and soon would have a literate citizenry and the rudiments of the rule of law long before the Ottomans. It is hard to see that this represents historical unfairness—except to the people who lived under the Ottomans, many of whom still suffer under despots. ♦

Ann Marlowe writes frequently about Afghanistan and is working on a book about David Golula and the origins of counterinsurgency theory.

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Humor in Cuneiform

These ancient artifacts aren't as funny as the Brooks/Reiner relics. **BY JOHN PODHORETZ**

Anachronism is funny. There is always a moment, watching a deadly serious movie in which Moses or Jesus or Marcus Aurelius speaks present-day English, when it either comes perilously close to invoking a gigglefest or hurls you into one by the unfortunate use of some locution that is five years rather than thousands of years old.

Year One
Directed by Harold Ramis

This is why the most brilliant moviemaking stroke of the past decade was Mel Gibson's use of Aramaic as the lingua franca of *The Passion of the Christ*, thereby avoiding any potential guffaws in the midst of the crucifixion and earning $700 million worldwide. Deliberate anachronism is funny, too. In *Love and Death*, Woody Allen's 19th-century Russian aristocrat is told by someone with a thick Russian accent that a woman he knows "is taking lovers." Woody doesn't understand: "She's taking uppers?"

In *Monty Python and the Holy Grail*, a revolutionary peasant, told that Arthur became king because the Lady of the Lake presented him with Excalibur, scoffs: "Strange women lying in ponds distributing swords is no basis for a system of government. . . . You can't expect to wield executive power just because some watery tart threw a sword at you!"

And then there is the gold standard in deliberate anachronism: the 90 minutes or so of sheer bliss during which Mel Brooks and Carl Reiner, over the course of 14 years, recorded the series of comedy routines in which an interviewer asks questions of a 2,000-year-old man. The joke is that the 2,000-year-old man is an Eastern European Yiddish-speaking Jew whose perspective on history has not been helped along at all by his longevity. He has over 42,000 children, and not one comes to visit him.

"How did you feel when Joan of Arc was burned at the stake?" he is asked after he says he dated her. His answer: "Terrible." The greatest historical invention? Saran Wrap. The first national anthem? "Let 'em all go to Hell except Cave 76!" The missing Shakespeare play? *Queen Alexandra and Murray*, which closed in Egypt.

The 2,000-Year-Old Man has just been mashed up with the Bing Crosby/Bob Hope road pictures and remade as the new comedy *Year One*, in which the pudgy scenery-chewer Jack Black buddies up with Michael Cera, the gangly boy-man costar of *Juno* who possesses a miraculous sense of comic timing and an entirely original way with a line of dialogue. The movie begins with the two of them living in prehistory with a small tribe in which they are also-rans because they are bad hunters and not especially good gatherers ("and those are the only two jobs we have here").

They leave their village and meet up with Cain just as he is killing Abel; end up meeting Abraham just as he is binding Isaac; run away from Abraham because he announces his plan to circumcise them ("it's a sleek new look, everyone's going to be doing it"); and find themselves in Sodom, where they are pursued by a randy High Priest as they attempt to rescue two girls from their home village who are about to be sacrificed to the gods.

Year One comes from the comedy factory of Judd Apatow, Hollywood's phenom of the moment whose name has appeared as a crucial creative player on *The 40-Year-Old Virgin* and *Knocked Up* and *Forgetting Sarah Marshall* and *Superbad* and *Pineapple Express* and *Step Brothers* and *Talladega Nights*—all in the past four years.

There comes a moment when someone like Apatow hits it big, when everybody in the motion picture world wants to do business with him, he can get practically anything made, and so even his secondary projects get funded and produced. That was the case with *Walk Hard*, a full-length Apatow parody of a perfectly good movie (the Johnny Cash biopic *Walk the Line*) that hardly deserved the attention or the mockery. *Walk Hard* was funny for about 10 minutes and excruciating for the other 90.

Something similar is true of *Year One*; though it's much better than *Walk Hard*, it still runs out of gas in exactly the same way. *Year One* is primarily the work of the writer-director Harold Ramis, a comedy phenom himself 30 years ago who faded for a decade and then came out of nowhere in 1993 to make *Groundhog Day*, an extraordinary comedy that deepens and satisfies in a manner unlike almost any other film ever made. Since then, Ramis hasn't done much worth mentioning, but he is one of Apatow's idols, and so here is *Year One.*

The comic anachronism here is that Cera and Black act like the kids from Apatow movies as they travel through Genesis. It's cute, but Ramis doesn't work it anywhere near as brilliantly or interestingly as Brooks and Reiner did. And he even appears, for a moment, to have something serious in mind, as when he shows in rather graphic detail Cain smashing Abel over the head repeatedly with a rock.

Ramis seems to be trying to convey the nature of man's cruelty to man in the middle of his wan comedy, which is also punctuated by Cera urinating on himself and Black eating feces. There is something funny about the idea that Ramis and Apatow think *Year One* is an appropriate forum for thought-provoking commentary on faith, reason, and violence. But like Anne Baxter as Nefretiri in *The Ten Commandments* calling out to Moses—"You stubborn, splendid, adorable fool!"—the comedy is, in this case, entirely inadvertent. ♦

John Podhoretz, editor of Commentary, *is* THE WEEKLY STANDARD*'s movie critic.*

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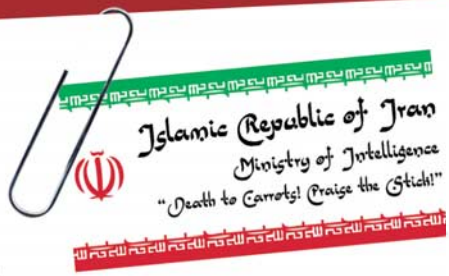
Parody

"Iran . . . is breezy with freedom. It is certainly freer now, despite Ahmadinejad, than it was when I first visited in 2001. There are satellite dishes all over the place, which bring accurate news via BBC Persia and the Voice of America. The place is awash in western music, movies and books. The Supreme Leader has a website; ayatollahs are blogging. You can get the New York Times and CNN online."

—Joe Klein*, Time, *June 16, 2009



MEMORANDUM

To: Division Chief, Section V-7 (Infidels and Fools, Journalism Division)
From: Tehran Field Team F
Re: Surveillance Report. JOE KLEIN

Per your Excellencies' enlightened instructions, we maintained surveillance of the American Journalist JOE KLEIN (CODE NAME: "OSTRICH") during his recent trip to Iran to cover the Soccer Riots. Our Report:

7:52 am. Subject OSTRICH arrives Tehran Airport. Stops briefly at Airport bookstore. Clerk reports he was agitated not to find a book by author "Anonymous" on the shelf. (WE ARE UNAWARE OF THIS AUTHOR.)

8:01 am. Subject OSTRICH enters Taxi 06751. Asks driver (AGENT K-32) several questions to learn "word on street." *Question*: Is Infidel Bush still hated here? Agent K-32 answers per usual procedure with journalists.

8:40 am. OSTRICH checks into Special Hotel 3 we maintain for infidels. Telephone intercepts show he called U.S.A. informing a man called "Rick Stengel" in New York, USA (LOCATION CODENAME: "JEW HIVE") that he was "worried his life was in danger but he would go where the story took him."

9:22 am. Orders copy of "Free Willy" on hotel pay-movie system.

11:58 am. Leaves hotel, wearing dark glasses and floppy hat. Crosses street to Ali Habbib Café. Asks many questions of Waiter (AGENT K-23). Transcript below:

OSTRICH: "Do you still hate America because of Bush?"
AGENT K-23: "Death to Bush, we want peace."
OSTRICH: "Sounds reasonable. Are you free here to do what you want?"
AGENT K-23: "Of course. We have Internet and New York Times."
OSTRICH: "So it is not like, say, Russia."
AGENT K-23: "Of course not. We can vote. Very free."

12:29 pm. Subject meets several other infidel journalists for lunch at hotel restaurant. A long and noisy disturbance breaks out at end of meal. Waiter (AGENT L-84) reports disturbance concerned dividing up bill.

2:49 pm. OSTRICH leaves hotel for Ali Habbib Café. Several glorious Basij militia volunteers begin crossing street on motorcycles to beat the infidel with iron bars but are intercepted by our plainclothes men and ordered to desist. OSTRICH does not notice as he is preoccupied posing for picture taken by shoeshine boy in front of café.

3:19 pm. In café, OSTRICH asks Waiter (AGENT K-23) if numerous motorcycles he sees on street are sign of prosperity. Agent K-23 replies yes, he has a wonderful motorcycle from generous and beloved Islamic government.

4:02 pm. Back at hotel for nap.

7:12 pm. Dinner alone at hotel restaurant. Gives Obama "Hope" T-shirt to busboy. (FAMILY NOW UNDER DETENTION, PENDING INVESTIGATION.) Appears to briefly cry. Returns to room for remainder of night.

2:21 am. OSTRICH calls front desk to complain about "noise in street."

NEXT DAY: **8:49 am**. Hails taxi (unit 06751 driven by Agent K-32) again; he does not seem to notice this. Asks to be driven to "sights" in city. Usual route taken: children's hospital, green energy center, Death to Zionism park.

10:57 am. OSTRICH returns to hotel. Checks out one hour later. Rides Taxi 06751 back to airport.

3:20 pm. Departs for JEW HIVE on flight 0202.

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